

HMP Featherstone

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Preparation for life and work programmes:
 - employability training
 - literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
 - personal development and social integration.

Description of the provider

1. HMP Featherstone is a secure Category C training prison situated four miles north of Wolverhampton. It caters for 687 adult male prisoners. The average length of stay is 12 months. There are 30 lifer prisoners, approximately 10% are identified as foreign national prisoners and about 30% are from minority ethnic groups.
2. A mix of prison staff and external contractors provides the learning and skills. The Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contractor is Derby College which provides a range of programmes, for example, information and communication technology (ICT), food hygiene, street maintenance, literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), preparation for employment, art, personal development, budgeting and money management, and healthy living. Stoke College, Dudley College, Matthew Boulton College and the Training Partnership provide a mix of accredited training and assessment in construction trades, engineering, retail, and infection control, as well as qualifications in cleaning and support services. The Prison Service provides training in industrial cleaning, first aid at work, physical education (PE) and lift truck operations. 'In Training' provides information, advice and guidance, funded through OLASS. Many of the prisoners have poor levels of literacy and numeracy. In addition to this, some are frequently disaffected and have drug dependency, social exclusion and emotional difficulties.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Employability training	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Employability training	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Overall achievement and standards and the quality of provision are satisfactory. This includes employability training, literacy, numeracy, ESOL, personal development and social integration. The provision meets the needs of most learners. Information, advice and guidance across the provision are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the prison's approach to equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

4. Capacity to make further improvement is satisfactory. Since the previous reinspection in 2006, HMP Featherstone has experienced significant staff changes, including the appointment of a new governor. Plans for a virtual learning suite that includes internet access and the refurbishment of the education department's ICT facilities are well advanced. However, the prison has failed to complete some key tasks by the target dates. The prison has a suitable range of appropriate strategic and operational objectives for the development of learning and vocationally relevant training. The focus on resettlement and actions to reduce offending are clear. The prison has maintained effective working links with partners to develop the availability of learning and skills. Weaknesses noted at reinspection are now satisfactory. As recognised by the prison, the good use of management data identified at the reinspection is currently satisfactory and needs further improvement. The range of provision has improved and new programmes introduced. However, in all three provisions noteworthy programmes are either not offered or unavailable in sufficient quantity. At reinspection, inspectors judged quality assurance arrangements to be well conceived and implemented. Since this time the development and systematic implementation of effective quality assurance arrangements has been very slow. Progress in introducing a system to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement has also been slow. Some provision is over-reliant on short-term funding sources.
5. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The final self-assessment report includes appropriate input from learning and skills providers. Effective use is made of learners' views. However, there is limited use of feedback from workshop staff. Many staff do not fully understand the content of the self-assessment report nor how it contributes to improving the quality of provision. The report identifies many of the strengths and areas for improvement noted at inspection and matches most of the grades awarded by inspectors. Judgements are generally clear and evaluative. Little effective use is made of data to support statements regarding achievement and standards. The head of learning and skills effectively monitors the detailed action plan to drive improvements.

Key strengths

- High achievement on many programmes
- Good employability skills training
- Good focus on reducing re-offending and resettlement
- Strong information, advice and guidance
- Particularly effective external partnership working

Key areas for improvement

- Further improvement of the quality of teaching and learning
- Further development of the learning and skills curriculum
- Introduction of all planned accredited training
- Full implementation of all quality assurance and improvement processes
- Better promotion and use of the library to support learning and skills

Main findings

Employability training

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

6. Learners' achievement of qualifications and individual learning aims is satisfactory. Most of those who complete the programmes achieve a qualification. On some of the construction and engineering programmes, between 60% and 70% stay for the planned time. Learners' progress is slow on desktop publishing and hospitality programmes. Programmes provided by the PE department are very good with 100% achieving a qualification. In addition, seven of nine learners achieved communications key skills at level 2. Arrangements for accrediting unit achievement in desktop publishing and qualifications in catering are inadequate.
7. Learners develop good employability skills in street work programmes, construction and the engineering workshops. Learners' welding skills are particularly good. Learners working in the kitchen have developed a wide range of practical skills and are able to cope with the pressures and demands made in a busy production kitchen. Industrial cleaning learners, once trained, use their knowledge to maintain the prison environments to a high standard. Attendance on programmes and in contract workshops is erratic. The work ethic is poor and insufficiently reinforced. Prison regimes often result in prisoners arriving up to 25 minutes late.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

8. Teaching and learning in education are satisfactory. In the better lessons, tutors are well prepared and use a wide variety of learning styles which motivates learners. They are keen and eager to learn. In the weaker sessions, there is too much use of paper-based resources and insufficient recording of learners' progress. Much of the recording of progress and setting of targets does not relate sufficiently to the learners' progress. Practical teaching is good with well qualified and experienced staff from a range of providers.
9. Trainers use practical resources to good effect. Contract workshops offer work opportunities such as making prison cell doors and windows. Experienced staff ensure high standards of tidiness and health and safety in workshops. Staff use Computerised Numerical Control equipment very effectively to demonstrate tasks and learners quickly gain good skills in a relatively short time. In the contract workshops, staff provide satisfactory training to ensure that prisoners are able to meet the requirements of the work. In the furniture assembly workshops, prisoners work on numerous tasks to enable them to develop a wide range of skills. Materials used in some areas, for example food hygiene, are illegible and poorly copied. Accredited lift truck training is well resourced and popular with prisoners.

10. Construction programme trainers work well together to support practical skills development and literacy and numeracy through contextualised learning packages. Architect plans and brick walls built by learners are used to develop skills in estimating. Promotion and development of literacy, language and numeracy skills within some vocational and work areas are weak.
11. There is very good use of peer mentoring, training and assessment in industrial cleaning. Prisoners have been trained and are qualified to train and assess other prisoners. There is a good rapport and respect between learners and peer mentors.
12. The range of vocational learning opportunities is good. Learners can develop skills in areas including manufacturing and engineering operations, construction, warehousing, industrial cleaning, catering, PE, lift truck operations and information technology (IT). A complementary range of generic qualifications is also available to enhance learning, such as customer service, safeguarding children and team leading. The construction programmes offer progression from three-week taster programmes to longer diploma programmes; although these are relatively new and yet to be fully developed. An insufficient number of entry level and advanced programmes are available to meet the needs of learners, particularly those serving long sentences. Some practical areas, such as waste management and garden work, do not have accredited qualifications and in other areas the prison has been slow to introduce appropriate training and qualifications, particularly in catering, brickwork and plastering. Processes for recognising and recording of progress and achievement for non-accredited learning have not been developed.
13. There is satisfactory guidance and support for learners. The level of support from teaching staff is variable and the responsibility lies with the provider. A number of colleges and private training providers support learning but the process of prison-wide support lacks coherence and structure.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

14. Achievement and standards of learners' work are satisfactory. All learners who complete literacy, numeracy and key skills programmes pass first time. The ESOL provision has recently changed and, of the 12 learners that started on the programme, five have completed without achieving a qualification and four are still in learning. Attendance on literacy and numeracy programmes is high but many learners are still in learning and have not yet achieved. Most learners produce good work in learning sessions, demonstrating newly acquired skills. Punctuality is poor. Lessons often start up to 15 minutes late despite learners arriving at education classes on time. Too much time is spent waiting for latecomers and lessons are often interrupted by learners attending appointments.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

15. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory and in some lessons good. In the better learning sessions, learners are engaged and well motivated. Tutors and learners work well with each other. Sessions are punctuated with breaks and learners are able to socialise in a well-presented rest area with fresh drinking water available.
16. Learners are enthusiastic about the learning process. Most tutors plan lessons well and provide a range of tasks to take account of learners' differing needs and preferred learning styles. However, in the weaker lessons there is too much use of paper-based resources and insufficient variation in teaching and learning to meet individual needs. Management of sessions and learners' behaviour in most of the classes observed was good. Most learners actively engaged in learning. In some sessions learners helped and supported each other well. Particularly good use is made of a computer programme to support literacy lessons and learners appreciate the chance to practise their computer skills. Peer mentors are used well in ESOL classes to help learners develop speaking and listening skills through audio tape work. ESOL learners use blindfolds to good effect to allow them to taste and feel different materials and thus help them to identify words. In many cases, particularly in the vocational training programmes, contextualised teaching materials are used effectively by Stoke on Trent College and the Training Partnership to support literacy, numeracy and key skills development.
17. Derby College provides a flexible literacy and numeracy curriculum and adapts well to the needs of the population. Classes are put on at short notice to make sure that most prisoners have access to basic skills support. Staff work well together to ensure that there is continuity of learning. Accommodation in the education centre is bright, spacious and well decorated with posters and charts to promote subject specific identity. Accommodation in some vocational training areas is small and cramped. Some accommodation in the education centre suffers from loud noises from the PE rooms located on the first floor.
18. The literacy, numeracy and key skills provision generally meets the needs of the prisoner population although there is insufficient ESOL provision. Derby College provides two sessions per week. These are timetabled on a Monday and Tuesday. Learners have to wait until the following Monday to carry on their learning and this inhibits their progress.
19. The prison is currently awaiting refurbishment of its IT resources as part of the LSC 'refresh programme'. Insufficient use is made of information and learning technology in the classroom to support learning. Much of the teaching material is based on worksheets and often these are of poor quality. Little use is made of colour copies and learners often have difficulty in recognising pictures on the handouts.
20. Support for learners is generally good. Learners complete a thorough initial assessment of their learning needs, including their preferred learning styles.

However, some of this information is not routinely passed to teaching staff at the beginning of learners' programmes and staff often have to search for it.

21. The recording and monitoring of learners' progress in literacy, numeracy and language sessions is weak. In some cases records do not identify specific measurable targets to reflect learners' progress. Learners' records at the end of lessons are sparse and aimed at the production of worksheets rather than the learning that has taken place.
22. A Skills for Life strategy has not been produced for the prison and the ESOL provision is delivered by unqualified staff. However, Derby College has clear plans to support staff and provide appropriate staff training. There are links with other prisons and the main college site but these have not yet been formalised. The prison does offer part-time education for those who work in contract workshops.

Personal development and social integration

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

23. Learners achieve well on the few social and life skills courses that are offered. Personal development, budgeting and healthy living programmes have 100% pass rates. The pass rate in art is currently satisfactory at 68%. Eighteen learners are still in learning. Average attendance on some programmes is low, for example 65% on the healthy living course. Learners produce good standards of work in art and this is recognised through learners gaining national awards.
24. Development of prisoners' personal skills is good. Much good work is done to develop their personal skills and ability to engage effectively in social interaction. Prisoners are encouraged and take pride in their environment, personal hygiene and appearance. Bad language and behaviour are minimised and prisoners comply with a code of conduct and expected behaviours. Achievement and progression are celebrated. The prison governor takes every opportunity to support learning and skills by formally presenting awards to learners.
25. Attendance is satisfactory. However, class numbers in many lessons are low. Prisoners are taken out of classes to join other programmes. For example some prisoners have been taken off programmes to join the parentcraft and barbering programmes. Punctuality is often poor, lessons start late, and there is insufficient urgency to move prisoners into classes.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

26. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. In the better sessions learners are engaged and group work is used very effectively to provide opportunities for social interaction. Lessons are well prepared. In the weaker sessions there is some overemphasis on the use of worksheets and insufficient checking of learning and understanding. Peer mentors work well to support tutors and

increase other learners' confidence and understanding. There is insufficient use of information and learning technology in teaching and learning. Computers are not available in most education learning areas. Learners do not have the opportunity to prepare or improve their work with the use of computers. Many of the photocopied handouts issued to learners are poor. Prisoners on higher level Open University degree programmes have insufficient access to computers to support their learning.

27. Prison-wide interventions and activities focus well on supporting prisoners' personal and social skills development. Relationships between staff and prisoners are mutually respectful and positive. The Personal Officer scheme is working well in most areas. One residential unit has a range of successful initiatives to support prisoners' development. Activities that encourage the strengthening of links with families and partners are good. Resettlement support is effective. There is good focus on the reducing re-offending agenda and the pathways to resettlement.
28. The planning and recording of learners' learning and development is insufficiently developed. Individual learning plans are not used to set learners' targets for progression or involve learners in setting their own targets. There is insufficient monitoring of learner progress. Most targets are programme based and there is rarely any reference to targets relating to personal development. Results of initial assessment and learning styles diagnostics are not used effectively to plan and individualise learning. Subject-specific learning plans are developed; however they are not always linked to the overall sentence plan. In some lessons there is insufficient focus on checking of learning. End of session reviews focus on the activities that have been done rather than what has been learnt.
29. The provision is narrow with insufficient progression for learners on social and life skills programmes. Programmes consist of level 1 and 2 in personal development, parentcraft, healthy living and budget and money management. The population consists of sentenced prisoners serving sentences over two years, with at least 12 months of their sentence to serve. Programmes are short, usually lasting up to three weeks. There is insufficient opportunity to progress and use the knowledge and skills developed on these programmes to a higher level or on related programmes.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: Grade: 3

30. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The prison has established a range of appropriate strategic and operational objectives for the development of learning and vocationally relevant training. A three year development plan clearly focuses on learning and its contribution to successful prisoner resettlement and reducing offending. In the previous three years, 25 of the 44 participating learners completing a construction qualification as part of the 'Reconstruction

Programme' for North Staffordshire and Birmingham were successfully placed in a relevant job on release. Four out of the 44 have re-offended. Links between the head of learning and skills and head of resettlement are productive. Prison managers make appropriate use of current information on skills and employment patterns to plan the range of provision. As recognised in the self-assessment report, partnership working with external organisations is good. For example, an initiative between Stoke College and the prison has been established to find employment for prisoners on release to north Staffordshire and Birmingham. A pilot Train to Gain programme in catering has just started and a barbering programme is planned to start shortly. Engagement with employers is a prison priority. The prison has used a good range of delivery partners to provide education and training to meet identified needs. Construction provision has been significantly increased. Actions to introduce programmes in tiling and flooring are well advanced. However, the prison recognises the need to further enhance the accredited qualifications and Skills for Life support in vocational areas. The range of social and life skills provision and progression routes is narrow.

31. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are good. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. Management is good. Advisers use a wide range of effective techniques and materials to help prisoners reach realistic decisions. All prisoners receive good quality information, advice and guidance during their induction and before release. In addition, they benefit from very effective follow-up sessions. Advisers offer good support to prisoners from entry to exit or transfer to another establishment.
32. Arrangements for staff development are satisfactory. Tutors are suitably qualified or working towards an appropriate award. The provision is appropriately flexible and allows learners to combine work with other activities. Opportunities to participate in PE, library and chaplaincy sessions are available throughout the week. However, no evening or weekend education provision is available. Short waiting lists exist for education and most vocational training places. However, significant waiting lists exist for places on the newly introduced construction programmes.
33. The prison collects a wide range of data and information relating to learning and skills. Data analysis is satisfactory. All programmes meet awarding body requirements. Targets are not used sufficiently to support the performance monitoring process. The prison has detailed quality assurance procedures for its learning and skills activities. These support a well defined quality cycle. Effective use is made of programme data to monitor attendance and pass rates. The prison regularly seeks learner and staff feedback, which is appropriately analysed and used to improve provision. However, implementation of some aspects of the quality assurance and improvement arrangements is incomplete. This area for improvement is recognised in the self-assessment. The head of learning and skills appropriately monitors subcontractors' performance. However, not all service level agreements fully ensure that the prison has access to the data it needs to effectively monitor quality. Internal quality audits do not provide sufficient detail on the quality of completed documents or the consistency of use by staff.

34. Quality initiatives are over-reliant on informal processes. Learning and skills activities outside the OLASS contract provision do not comprehensively use teaching and learning observations to secure quality improvement. Not all staff have been observed within the required timescale. Most observation grades awarded by the education department are consistently higher than those given at inspection. The current quality arrangements do not recognise the poor punctuality and insufficient use of information and learning technology noted in many lessons during inspection. Opportunities to share best practice are not fully implemented across all of the provision.
35. HMP Featherstone has introduced no processes to recognise and record skills development in non-accredited activities. The prison has carried out some work before introducing suitable arrangements. However, progress has been slow.
36. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The prison has appropriate diversity and disability policies for staff, visitors and offenders. Safeguarding is given high priority. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Appropriate staff vetting and training are carried out. The prison has suitable policies and procedures in place to minimise risk and address identified concerns. Staff and learners work together effectively in an environment of mutual respect. Prison strategies appropriately reduce barriers to participation in learning. Promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity are satisfactory. Learners are well represented on the prison diversity team. Issues raised in this forum are effectively dealt with by the prison-wide race equality action team. A group of 20 prisoners provide good advocacy support for offenders on the wings. The prison participates in an adequate range of promotion events to raise staff and prisoners' awareness of equality and diversity. A newsletter aimed at raising awareness of prisoners' rights and responsibilities is regularly produced and distributed by prisoners. Learners' achievement is suitably celebrated. Most tutors satisfactorily promote and reinforce learners' understanding of diversity. However, the range of social and life skills provision and progression opportunities is narrow. There are not enough ESOL programmes or specialist resources to support learning.
37. Pay rates are generally equitable between different activities. Allocations processes for education, vocational training and work are fair. The prison appropriately monitors the participation rates of different ethnic groups and takes effective remedial action where necessary. While the number of vulnerable and elderly learners is low, support to address their identified needs is effective. The prison has limited provision for prisoners with mobility difficulties to access education. Sports hall, textile and engineering provision is also limited. All teaching sessions are carried out in an appropriately safe environment. However, for many participants the noise levels in desktop publishing classes impedes effective learning. Learners' access to the library and the low level and quality of books and other resources does not effectively support learning and skills development.

What learners like:

- 'I really like the street works course'
- 'I want to do plastering as it will help me get a job'
- 'I like working in engineering as it is real work'
- 'PE keeps me occupied and focused on getting through my sentence'
- 'The really good construction programmes, the tutors know what they are doing'
- 'The help I get with writing my curriculum vitae'

What learners think could improve:

- 'The time spent waiting to get through gates for appointments'
- 'Getting to the library, better books and some music CDs'
- Waiting time to get on programmes
- 'I can't use computers for my degree course unless I go on a IT course'
- 'More and better timed ESOL classes'
- Higher level IT classes and qualifications