

HMP Dorchester

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Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider	4
Summary of grades awarded.....	5
Overall judgement	6
Effectiveness of provision.....	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement	7
Main findings.....	8
Employability training	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision	8
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL.....	9
Achievement and standards	9
Quality of provision	10
Personal development and social integration	11
Achievement and standards	11
Quality of provision	11
Leadership and management	12
Equality of opportunity	12
What learners like about HMP Dorchester	15
What learners think HMP Dorchester could improve	15

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 ESOL
 - personal development and social integration

Description of the provider

1. HMP Dorchester is an old Victorian style adult male local establishment serving the Dorset courts, comprising Bournemouth and Dorchester Crown Courts and associated Magistrate's courts, as well as Yeovil Magistrate's court in Somerset. The average population is 240 with around 120 new receptions a month. About 30 prisoners are discharged each month and some 87 transferred to other prisons. The average length of stay is 75 days although this is inflated due to long-term court cases and retained prisoners. At the time of the inspection 20 prisoners were young adults and a small number of vulnerable prisoners were accommodated in the hospital wing. Around one third of prisoners are on remand. Most of the prisoners are under 45 years of age. The prison has approximately 44 full-time education places and 52 identified full-time workplaces with some 14 part-time places in the kitchens. About 6% of prisoners have been identified with ESOL support needs.
2. Strode College is responsible for providing literacy, numeracy and ESOL support, including key skills. The college also provides some employability and vocational training including information and communication technology (ICT) and other related courses, industrial cleaning and food safety in catering. A4E provides courses in personal and social development including art, cookery, music and health and safety. Advance, a part of the Tribal group, is responsible for information, advice and guidance (IAG). The prison has no contract workshops. The prison offers painting and decorating work around the prison itself. External agencies provide links with the prison resettlement unit and employers to assist prisoners in getting jobs upon release. The governor has recently taken up post and an acting head of learning and skills has recently been appointed.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Employability training	Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Employability training	Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade: 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade: 2

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

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade: 2

4. The prison's capacity to make further improvement is good. Since the previous reinspection in 2006, HMP Dorchester has experienced significant staff changes, including the recent appointment of a new governor and an acting Head of Learning and Skills (HOLS). The prison is also undergoing extensive refurbishment and continues to provide a full learning and skills provision during this transition.
5. The strengths of good management of change, effective strategies to widen participation and systematic action to improve the quality of provision have been further improved. Senior managers' commitment to learning and skills is very strong and participation in learning and skills has increased from 53% to 60%. Significant improvements have been made to quality improvement processes although the learning session observation process has yet to be fully implemented across all learning and skills. Access to information, advice and guidance has been rectified and is now very comprehensive. The use of data as a means of measuring performance and setting targets for improvement remains a weakness.
6. The prison has a well thought out range of appropriate strategic and operational objectives for the development of learning and skills. The focus on resettlement and actions to reduce the likelihood of re-offending is clear. The prison has greatly improved working links with internal and external partners and agencies to develop the availability of learning and skills and support for prisoners. The range of provision has improved and new programmes aimed at supporting Education, Training and Employment (ETE) have been successfully introduced. Progress in introducing a system to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement (RARPA) has been highly successful.
7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory with appropriate input from learning and skills providers and highlighted effectively progress from the previous inspection. Effective use was made of learners' views. However, there was limited involvement of staff from other areas of the prison. Most staff fully understood the content of the self-assessment report and how it contributed to improving the quality of provision. The report identified many of the strengths and areas for

improvement noted at inspection and matched most of the grades awarded by inspectors. Judgements were generally clear and evaluative. Little effective use was made of data to support statements regarding achievement and standards. Action and development plans are thorough and rigorously followed through. The head of learning and skills and senior prison staff effectively monitor the detailed action plans to drive improvements.

Key strengths

- High pass rates on most programmes
- Stimulating and well managed teaching and learning in many areas
- Good provision for developing literacy and numeracy
- Good provision for vulnerable prisoners
- Very good academic and pastoral support
- Very effective information, advice and guidance
- Strong prison wide leadership and management of learning and skills
- Strong internal and external partnerships with outstanding relationships between staff and learners

Key areas for improvement

- Low achievement on some personal development programmes
- Inadequate ESOL provision
- Inadequate quality and quantity of resources in the library
- Insufficient collection, analysis and use of data
- Self-assessment to support prison wide continuous improvement

Main findings

Employability training

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2

8. Learners' achievement of qualifications and individual learning aims are high. Pass rates on ICT courses are good with most learners who remain in the prison, achieving at least three units of a computer literacy award at level 1 and 2. Learners gain good vocational skills and knowledge as well as an understanding of the role of technology in wider society. Learners gain good personal and work skills in sport and recreation. All learners who complete the industrial cleaning programme, currently 87%, achieve a qualification. Some 80% of learners on the food hygiene courses gain the qualification.
9. Learners develop good employability skills in Physical Education (PE), BICS and on the employability scheme. The structured employability scheme helps learners look at work ethics in the various work areas and provides the opportunity to collect evidence of punctuality, motivation and commitment to work. Learners receive a reference from the contracted provider on their release from prison. Learners also gain valuable practice and are assessed in cleaning skills while in employment within the prison. Learners on PE courses are able to supervise sessions within the fitness area and also work well with people from local special schools. Attendance on programmes and the work ethic are good and reinforced positively. Learning sessions start promptly in most cases.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2

10. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning in education, training and PE are good. Learning sessions are well prepared and make good use of information and learning technologies (ILT) to support learning. A wide range of learning methods is used to motivate learners. Well qualified and experienced staff deliver good practical and theory sessions. Learners benefit from well planned and delivered ICT provision. Individual learning plans are used during each learning session to record achievement and progress and all learners are required to complete their plans in each learning session.
11. Tutors use practical resources well. ICT equipment is of a good standard. The BICS training room is used to effectively to demonstrate and practice skills before learners go out into the prison to put the skills into practice. Posters, leaflets and sport and fitness magazines are freely available to learners within the gymnasium to support their learning. A new classroom has been designated for PE but at the time of inspection was not being used due to security issues. Due to secondments within the PE department the programme is limited as the number of staff with training and assessment qualifications in specialist areas is reduced. A well resourced barber shop has recently opened on a wing which provides a realistic working environment for learners. Although this work is not accredited, staff

make good use of the RARPA process to monitor learners' progress. There is insufficient staffing in some areas which limits the provision of training available to learners. The barbering tutor is available only one day a week which can limit the speed of progress by learners.

12. Progression in PE and the BICS programmes are clear. Learners can progress to become assessors on the BICS programme. All prisoners have the opportunity to attend PE courses which range from entry level taster sessions to full time fitness industry qualifications for suitable gym orderlies. All learners that gain employment in the prison complete a qualification in health and safety and manual handling. However, there are missed opportunities to accredit skills gained in painting and decorating activities throughout the prison.
13. Support and advice for learners from education staff and prison officers is good. All learning is contextualised to help learners to better understand the requirements of their work. This is appreciated by learners. Learners are supported in a positive way to help them gain confidence and self-esteem. Support is well structured and coherent across providers' and prison staff. The Employability Scheme is well supported by prison staff in the clothing exchange and the kitchens where they provide daily and weekly feedback about performance by the learner within the workplace. This is recorded and used as evidence for the reference, provided upon release. Learners are also encouraged and supported to develop literacy and numeracy skills. The range of vocational learning opportunities is narrow but what is available is of a good standard. The further development of vocational and employment related training is restricted due to the space and facilities available in the prison.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2

14. Achievement and standards in literacy and numeracy are good. All learners who complete their courses achieve their learning aims and where appropriate their qualifications. Over the last six months pass rates have been 100% for literacy and numeracy at all levels. Most learners improve literacy and numeracy skills during their stay at Dorchester. Due to releases and transfers to other prisons some learners are unable to complete their programmes. The RARPA process is used well by learners who leave the prison before the end of their course.
15. Attendance at literacy and numeracy learning sessions is satisfactory. Punctuality is good and most learning sessions begin with a planned and purposeful start.
16. Learners make good and often very good progress in learning sessions. Many talk articulately and enthusiastically about their work. Learners are justifiably proud of their achievements and many maintain good quality portfolios of their work.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2

17. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and tutors support learners very well in learning sessions. Tutors know their learners well and the individual support learners receive is valued greatly. Learning sessions consist of learners whose abilities differ enormously. Great emphasis is placed on meeting the individual needs of learners both in the main education department and on the vulnerable prisoners' wing. Tutors set challenging tasks and activities that have been planned carefully at the appropriate level for each individual learner. Learners work very hard in learning sessions and are keen to do their best. Tutors check learning and progress frequently and provide detailed feedback on what learners need to do to improve.
18. Learning sessions usually consist of a variety of activities and ILT is used confidently to support learning. Tutors and learners use the interactive whiteboards particularly well. Tutors are skilled at relating the topic being covered to real life situations and this helps learners see the relevance and importance of the work they are doing. On a very few occasions, tutors are a too directive and do not give learners the opportunity to solve problems for themselves.
19. A good range of literacy and numeracy courses is available from entry level to level 2. These courses meet the needs of the prison population well although some leave before the end of their course. There are no specific ESOL courses for the small number of learners whose first language is not English. Accommodation in the main education department is satisfactory. Classrooms contain interesting displays of curriculum related materials to support learning. The accommodation used for education on the wing for vulnerable prisoners is inadequate. Noise levels are too high and learners become frustrated and do not always produce their best work. The extended learning scheme is successful in enabling prisoners who cannot access the main education provision for various reasons to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy. The scheme is also successful in helping learners to eventually access the main education provision. The prison also operates a successful Toe by Toe reading scheme and Storybook Dads which is also popular with prisoners who are parents of young children.
20. Learners are supported well throughout their time in the prison. IAG is supported by a thorough, well managed diagnostic assessment of learners' individual learning needs and literacy and numeracy skills. Learners understand this process well and it ensures learners are guided onto courses at appropriate levels. Tutors and learners are provided with this information and use it well to plan learning sessions and programmes and learners are clear about what they will be learning and how it relates to their development and employment opportunities.
21. Individual learning plans are used well to record progress and to establish targets for future learning. On occasions learning is disrupted by tutors taking learners off task to complete their plans.

Personal development and social integration

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

22. Learners' achievements are satisfactory on the few social and life skills courses that are offered. Most learners pass and are awarded a RARPA certificate outlining the competencies achieved. Most learning programmes have 60–70% pass rates.
23. Learners produce good standards of work in music and cookery sessions. Standards of work in art are satisfactory. Development of prisoners' personal skills is good. Much good work is done with prisoners to develop their personal skills and ability to engage effectively in social interaction. This is particularly noticeable in personal success programmes where they are encouraged to look closely at their strengths and weaknesses and develop action plans to help them gain work upon release. Bad language and behaviour is minimised and prisoners comply with a code of conduct and expected behaviours.
24. Learners attend punctually and prisons officers work hard to get prisoners to learning sessions on time. Timetabled breaks offer learners to opportunity to mix and have drinks. Most learners return to sessions on time and often work through their breaks. Attendance is satisfactory, however, average attendance on some programmes is low and learners are often removed from sessions to meet the requirements of the prison, for example, legal visits.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade: 2

25. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning overall are good. Tutors are very experienced in working with prisoners with a wide variety of learning and social barriers. Learners enjoy education classes and many see the opportunity to study as a way of improving their employment chances.
26. Learning sessions are well prepared and very effective use is made of interactive whiteboards and practical activities to support learning. In the better sessions learners are enthusiastically engaged in learning and group work is used very effectively to provide opportunities to develop social skills. In the music sessions learners with little or no knowledge of music theory are able to quickly construct pieces of music and feel a sense of achievement and pride in their work. Learners work well together and increase other learners' confidence and self-esteem.
27. Individual learning plans are used well to develop short-term targets. However, time taken to complete plans in the middle of learning sessions sometimes disrupts group working. Learners' development of interpersonal skills is not always recognised and recorded, and linking to the wider key skills, such as working with others and improving own learning does not take place.

28. Prison-wide interventions and activities focus well on supporting prisoners' personal and social skills development. Working relationships between staff and prisoners are very good. The prison has a range of successful initiatives to support prisoners' development particularly the strengthening of links with families and partners through family visits. Learners in cookery sessions produce cakes for visiting families and encourage children to decorate them. Learners' achievements are celebrated well with a learner of the month award. Names and photographs are displayed in the education department together with a brief description of the reason for the award. This may be academic success or improvements in learning and personal development.
29. Information, advice and guidance is well managed and effectively supports most learners. Initial assessment results are used effectively to plan learning. Resettlement support is effective with a good focus on the reducing re-offending agenda and pathways to resettlement. Links with internal and external agencies are good. An employment scheme in the prison provides prisoners working in jobs such as kitchen, clothing exchange stores etc with recognition of job related skills such as motivation, punctuality and taking responsibility.
30. Learning areas are satisfactory with art work displayed around the walls. Some classrooms are small and cramped and in one area, the classroom has to be shared between ICT, cookery and personal development courses. The number of courses using the room is restricted. The provision within social and life skills is narrow.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade: 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

31. Leadership and management are good. Since the previous inspection the prison has established a range of appropriate strategic and operational objectives for the development of learning and skills clearly focused on its contribution to successful prisoner resettlement and reducing the likelihood of re-offending. The recently appointed acting head of learning and skills has been instrumental in driving the prison towards an inclusive regime, with good initial assessment of learners' needs, very effective IAG and good provision of learning and skills. Learning and skills participation has increased from 53% in 2008/09 to 60% currently.
32. Senior prison staff are fully committed to supporting learning and skills. The strategic and operational management structures fully integrate learning and skills with resettlement, offender management and the work related to the pathways to reducing re-offending. Communications between staff are very good and a clear structure of meetings links staff, providers and partners to self-assessment and quality action/development plans. Priorities for the prison are articulated well and

despite construction and refurbishment work around the prison prisoners are able to gain access to learning and skills. Since the previous inspection additional training has been introduced, for example, a barbering course on the wings.

33. Links between learning and skills providers in the prison are very effective. Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) managers all work from the same office and many staff work for both OLASS contractors. Learners' engagement with staff is especially good and they are supported well by staff both academically and pastorally. Recently introduced comments books in education are used well by staff to acknowledge learners' and staff success as well as issues and concerns. Senior prison staff make constructive comments and record how issues have been resolved. Records are monitored and discussed and used to support further developments of learning and skills.
34. As identified in the self-assessment report, partnership working with external organisations is good. Partners include voluntary agencies, Jobcentre Plus, Police, Probation Service and local authorities. Frequent meetings with agencies take place and include prisoners. Prisoners openly discuss issues and are able to meet with appropriate agency representatives to resolve issues. These often range from housing problems to employment. Several prisoners have successfully achieved work with employers through this route. A local initiative funded through the LSC is working well to support local prisoners. The programme has exceeded its target of 2% of released prisoners into education or training by 6%. Other successful initiatives include one introduced by the chaplaincy to provide released prisoners with mentors on the outside.
35. The RARPA framework has been successfully introduced into the prison by the OLASS providers. This process has been well managed and the assessment and verification processes are thorough. Most staff and learners have a clear understanding of RARPA. Many prisoners unable to complete programmes due to their length of stay have achieved a RARPA certificate showing the skills achieved. RARPA is not seen as an alternative award for the low achievers but as an additional award to improve their employability on release.
36. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are good, reaching over 97% of the prison population. 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, including advice on disclosure and job applications. 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.
37. 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. Short waiting lists exist for education and some training places, for example industrial cleaning and barbering.

38. The prison collects a wide range of data and information relating to learning and skills. It has detailed quality assurance procedures for its learning and skills activities. It regularly seeks learner and staff feedback, which is appropriately analysed and used to improve provision. However, implementation of some quality assurance aspects and improvement arrangements is incomplete. Self-assessment is not yet fully implemented. Targets are not used sufficiently to support the performance monitoring process. Data analysis is weak. Effective use is not made of programme data to easily monitor attendance and pass rates. These areas for improvement are identified in the self-assessment report.
39. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The prison has appropriate diversity and disability policies for staff, visitors and offenders. 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. The prison participates in an adequate range of promotion events to raise staff and prisoners' awareness of equality and diversity. Most tutors satisfactorily promote and reinforce learners' understanding of diversity, although some inappropriate language is often unchallenged.
40. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Appropriate staff vetting and training is carried out. The prison has suitable policies and procedures in place to minimise risk and address identified concerns.
41. The provision of learning and skills has been extended for those prisoners housed on the vulnerable prisoner wing. Learners are able to access literacy and numeracy courses and ICT on the wing although the delivery takes place out in association areas and is often subject to general noise which on occasions impedes delivery. Those prisoners on the vulnerable prisoner wing are able to go to the education department on a Friday morning to take advantage of the better resources for ICT enjoy other courses.
42. Allocations processes for education, vocational training and work are fair, but pay for education is much lower than that for other activities. The prison appropriately monitors the participation rates of different ethnic groups and takes effective remedial action where necessary. The inappropriate location of the library on the fourth level of the wings together with the low level and quality of books and other resources does not effectively support learning and skills development.

What learners like:

- 'Support from great teaching staff'
- Feedback learners receive about their work
- Getting qualifications
- Experiencing educational success for the first time
- Realising that they could do things they didn't previously believe they could do
- Timetabled breaks in sessions
- 'Prison has done more for me than school'

What learners think could improve:

- 'Not enough jobs or training'
- 'It is difficult to get onto BICS training'
- 'I need more money'