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Ms J Wharton
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Dear Ms Wharton

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: numeracy – tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 and 13 October 2010 to look at your work in numeracy.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements was gathered from the women's and men's estates and included: interviews with prisoners, senior managers, staff from learning and skills and offender management, prison officers and external partners; visits to the kitchens, gardens, the gym and vocational and contract workshops; scrutiny of relevant documents; and observation of three learning sessions in numeracy.

Overall, HMP Peterborough (male and female) is satisfactory at tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives.

Key findings

- The prison's strategy for learning and skills has an appropriate structure and relevant generic objectives. However, these objectives do not relate specifically to meeting prisoners' development needs in numeracy (and literacy), and they fail to specify the very different development needs of men and women in prison. One of the key challenges for the prison is the relatively high level of need for training in numeracy on both estates and prisoners' general reluctance to take up relevant learning opportunities. The strategy has prioritised the need for further staff development and

greater links with local colleges and other prisons to enable staff to share good practice and develop their expertise in teaching.

- The prison uses a satisfactory process for assessing all prisoners' levels of numeracy when they enter the prison. Learning and skills staff use an appropriate assessment and they record the results for each prisoner on the electronic system used across the prison. However not all departments across the two estates use this information systematically. For example, the sentence planning process does not take sufficient account of prisoners' levels of numeracy when drawing up plans for each prisoner.
- The range of provision in numeracy is satisfactory. Learners can apply to attend discrete numeracy provision in a classroom or through learndirect, and a short programme in money management that takes place four times a year. The vocational and contract workshops provide useful opportunities for learners to develop skills in numeracy, but they do not receive any recognition or record of this learning. The prison does not currently have an analysis of the practical number skills prisoners need for life in prison and resettlement. The prison is developing its newly restructured pre-release service and plans to assess prisoners' development and support needs against each of the seven resettlement pathways. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this work.
- The prison has appropriate data on learners' achievement of qualifications against monthly targets. However, the prison is not using data well enough to evaluate the take-up of numeracy against identified need or the impact of the provision, including vocational learning and learndirect, on helping prisoners to improve their numeracy skills.
- The quality of the teaching and learning observed during the visit varied considerably. The better aspects of the observed sessions included the friendly environment some tutors created in which learners felt it safe to make mistakes and ask questions. Tutors were prepared to take a risk by providing very little initial guidance on how to do a task to help develop learners' skills in tackling problems independently. They used a good range of approaches to reinforce and check learners' understanding of mathematical concepts, as well as their ability to carry out calculations.
- The less effective aspects involved the tutors taking control of each activity by prompting too much, without allowing the learners sufficient time and space to think through the processes independently. Tutors relied too much on worksheets to give learners practice in doing sums and pre-set problems, without using real-life situations to create problems that were more relevant to the learners. Learners did not have enough opportunities to work in small groups to develop their skills in problem solving and share different methods for doing calculations.
- Pass rates were at least satisfactory and met agreed targets. Achievement on the money management courses in 2009 was good, but the numbers attending the courses in 2010 were low. Learners develop good numeracy skills in vocational settings. For example, the women interviewed were able to work out the complex timescales required during different treatments in beauty therapy and attending cookery courses used ratio well to work out how many ingredients to use. The men interviewed had

increased their confidence in measuring accurately when in the carpentry workshop. Prisoners interviewed who used the gym were adept at using percentages to work out the optimum heart rate for each type of exercise.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all relevant departments, including the offender management units, the pre-release centres, vocational workshops and work sites, use the results of the initial assessments in numeracy to plan prisoners' training and development, where relevant
- providing greater drive in the strategy for learning and skills to develop and promote the provision in numeracy to help meet the wider training and resettlement needs of prisoners, such as financial and time management, and to ensure that learners receive recognition for their learning through work and training
- increasing the use of data to measure take-up and impact of the numeracy provision against the prisoners' identified need
- using the observation of teaching and learning process to improve the quality of teaching and learning in numeracy to enable learners to increase their understanding of mathematical concepts and to develop skills in tackling problems independently
- developing the expertise of tutors and, where appropriate, learning support assistants, through a programme of professional development and greater opportunities for sharing ideas and good practice with external partners.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at HMP Peterborough.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter will be sent to the Skills Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Karen Adriaanse
Her Majesty's Inspector