

HMP Channings Wood

Prison education standalone progress monitoring visit report

Name of lead inspector: Judy Lye-Forster, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Address:

Denbury
Newton Abbot
Devon
TQ12 6DW

Progress monitoring visit

Ofsted context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all Ofsted routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections of education, skills and work activities in prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), Ofsted is carrying out progress monitoring visits. The visit was conducted by Ofsted alone without HMI Prisons. The visit was conducted on site. At the time of the visit, the establishment was at stage 3 of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Services' (HMPPS) recovery roadmap and had been at that stage for 13 weeks.

Progress monitoring visits aim to inform prisoners, employers and government on how establishments are meeting the education and skills needs of all prisoners during this period and how leaders are planning to reinstate a full education, skills and work curriculum. The focus of these visits is on the theme set out below. A progress judgement is made against the theme. That progress judgement will be one of the following: insufficient, reasonable or significant progress.

What progress are leaders making towards ensuring that staff teach a full curriculum and provide support to meet prisoners' needs, including the provision of remote learning?

Significant progress

In March 2020, in line with the COVID-19 pandemic-related national restrictions, leaders reduced the provision of education, skills and work (ESW) to in-cell education packs and essential industry activities, such as laundry and recycling. Leaders gradually increased prisoner engagement with education and skills as restrictions started to lift. Outreach workers supported prisoners on the residential blocks and gave them feedback and guidance on their work.

Remote learning packs are logically sequenced and provide a good introduction to the topic and an appropriate range of activities for the prisoner to work through. Through written feedback, teachers identify what the prisoner is doing well and what they need to focus on to improve their work. Packs demonstrate how prisoners have made progress in their knowledge and understanding and applied their new skills.

Since May 2021, face-to-face learning for restricted numbers has recommenced across the full range of education and vocational training. Teachers prioritised those prisoners who had successfully engaged with in-cell education to progress on to face-to-face learning. In barbering, functional skills, painting and decorating, and food hygiene, prisoners are developing useful skills and knowledge, making progress, and achieving relevant qualifications for employment on release. For example, a prisoner on the painting and decorating course has built on his prior knowledge and experience by developing new skills in wallpapering, using oil-based paints, and redecorating. Prisoners on the level 2 barbering course have progressed from in-cell

learning packs to the face-to-face practical course and are producing work of a good standard. Teachers use information about prisoners' learning needs to support them in their studies and share strategies to help them overcome challenges and worries.

Leaders have ensured that prisoners can quickly return to taking qualifications. Almost all the education and vocational training provision is accredited and some of the industries have accredited qualifications linked to them, such as warehousing and storage and sustainable recycling.

Leaders and managers implemented a thorough and well-considered plan to bring back the full ESW curriculum in a graduated and safe way over an eight-week period. Leaders approached the reintroduction of face-to-face teaching in a cautious and proportionate way by ensuring that the limited spaces could be fully utilised by allowing mixed groups to attend. Leaders and managers have maximised the purposeful activity spaces available across all areas of the prison and attendance is high. However, due to the ongoing restrictions, the number of available activity spaces only meets the needs of approximately half of the prisoner population.

Leaders have appropriately prioritised prisoners who have been hard to reach to receive targeted, in-person interventions to encourage and support them to take part in education and skills-based activities. They have effectively used the extensive information gathered across the prison to provide activities such as music, cookery and functional skills designed to encourage prisoners to re-engage in education. Staff implement an effective induction, initial advice and guidance (IAG) and allocations system. Prisoners' information gathered through this process is collated, shared and used effectively to inform their individual skills action plan and their allocation to activity. The IAG adviser ensures that the actions identified on the prisoners' skills action plan are realistic and are informed by both internal and external labour market information. Prisoners applying for internal ESW opportunities are advised about waiting lists and offered alternatives where long waits are expected. Prisoners take ownership of their skills action plans and take responsibility for undertaking the actions identified on their plans.

Approximately half of the prisoner population have identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Education staff and some industries staff have received LDD training. Furthermore, they have access to detailed information on prisoners' identified LDD needs or if they speak English as an additional language. Consequently, education, vocational training and industries staff can either support or signpost prisoners for individual support where needed. In addition, two dedicated staff members in education provide LDD support to both staff and prisoners in ESW areas. However, there is insufficient specialist support for the growing need in this area.

The distance learning coordinator continued to support those prisoners on distance learning and Open University courses throughout the main lockdown periods. Prisoners received help remotely by telephone and with keeping in touch with their

external tutors. As a result, prisoners were able to progress and achieve their degrees and courses throughout lockdown restriction periods.

Recommendations

- Leaders must prioritise increasing the provision of on-site specialist support for prisoners with additional learning needs so that they meet the needs of the prison population better.
- Leaders must prioritise increasing the numbers of available places in education, skills and work activities as soon as it is safe to do so.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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