

# HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall

Prison education standalone progress monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Suzanne Wainwright, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Visit dates:** 8 and 9 June 2021

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## **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 three 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?**

#### **Reasonable progress**

From March 2020, prison leaders suspended all face-to-face learning and training due to the COVID-19 pandemic national restrictions and the restrictions imposed by HMPPS. Instead, prisoners completed in-cell learning packs. Leaders recognised the challenges of learning this way and worked hard to improve the quality of the packs that prisoners received. For example, they tailored packs to prisoners' additional learning needs.

Leaders identified that prisoners' initial participation in in-cell learning was low. When restrictions eased, leaders prioritised prisoners who found independent learning difficult to attend face-to-face learning and receive learning support. However, the requirement that prisoners remain in group 'bubbles' currently limits the number of prisoners who can join face-to-face education, skills and work (ESW) activities.

Throughout the pandemic, leaders have kept essential workshops open, such as tailoring, grounds maintenance, waste management, and industrial cleaning. Prisoners have continued to work towards accredited qualifications in both in-cell learning and prison industries. For example, prisoners achieved level 1 food hygiene qualifications to work in the serveries.

Leaders have developed a clear and well-thought-out strategy to return to a full ESW curriculum. They have set specific milestones that, with appropriate risk assessment,

are designed to gradually reopen more classrooms and vocational and work activities. They have planned how they will use these activities wisely.

Leaders ensured that all prisoners who fell behind with their in-cell learning caught up. Those who could not sit formal examinations have now been able to do so. However, the current curriculum does not meet the needs of all prisoners. It does not provide more substantial learning programmes for those on longer sentences, or take into account fully what prisoners have achieved previously in other establishments.

Throughout the period of national restrictions, prisoners had limited access to careers information, advice and guidance. This service is now in place and suitably qualified advisers support prisoners. Managers ensure that advisers meet new prisoners at the expected contracted intervals. However, prisoners who have been at the prison for a while do not yet have access to the same levels of information, advice and guidance.

Through the recruitment of new staff, leaders have ensured that staff carry out assessments of all new prisoners' starting points. They have successfully overcome the significant backlog in assessments arising from staff vacancies. All prisoners have now completed an initial assessment of their English and mathematical skills.

Managers ensure that tutors are well prepared to support the needs of prisoners who attend education. Since returning to learning in formal classroom settings, prisoners have accelerated the progress they make, particularly in English and personal and social development courses. They produce work that is of a high standard. Tutors mark submitted work accurately. They provide useful feedback to prisoners on how to improve their work.

Instructors in prison workshops provide effective coaching and training. During national restrictions, prisoners used in-cell learning packs to help them to understand their job roles and the behaviours and expectations required of them. Prisoners in workshops demonstrate safe working practices, particularly in the fencing workshop where they use power tools, including nail guns.

Workshop instructors make specific links between English and mathematical skills and the high-quality commercial work that prisoners complete. For example, in the tailoring workshop, prisoners spend 30 minutes per day working on English and mathematics workbooks. Consequently, prisoners can explain clearly how they apply their mathematical skills to controlling stock and monitoring production targets. Instructors make good use of personal learning plans to agree behavioural and personal development targets. They review these frequently to celebrate prisoners' progress.

Throughout the national restrictions, prisoners had prompt access to the learning resources and materials that they needed to complete their in-cell learning, such as dictionaries and calculators. However, they could not and cannot yet access

information and communication technology (ICT), such as computers, including the Virtual Campus. This hinders the development of their ICT skills and prevents prisoners on distance-learning programmes from progressing more quickly in their learning.

As tutors could not access residential units, prisoners completing in-cell training have not received sufficient additional learning support. Residential units do not have in-cell telephony, or other useful technology, to support communications between prisoners and tutors. Tutors provided some 'through-the-door' coaching, when permitted. Prisoners on distance-learning courses do not have face-to-face or telephone access to their tutors. All communication is via the postal system, which reduces the timeliness of the support that prisoners need during their studies.

Staff refer prisoners who they assess as requiring additional learning support, have pre-existing education, health and care plans, or whose performance at work causes concern to specialist staff for further assessments. Prisoners receive an appropriate support plan to help them progress and/or improve their performance.

## **Recommendations**

- Prison leaders must ensure that the education and skills curriculum meets the needs and interests of prisoners serving long sentences and those who have already completed many learning and skills programmes in previous establishments.
- Prison leaders must ensure that they provide appropriate careers information, advice and guidance to prisoners who are serving longer sentences to better prepare them for their subsequent resettlement.
- Leaders must ensure that prisoners have access to digital resources that will support them to progress more quickly in their learning and training, including the Virtual Campus.
- Managers must ensure that, as the number of prisoners attending education increases, they recruit sufficient support staff to meet the learning needs of all prisoners.

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