

HMP Lewes

Prison education standalone progress monitoring visit report

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Visit dates: 28 and 29 September 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 2 of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Services' (HMPPS) recovery roadmap and had been at that stage for one day.

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?

Insufficient progress

Leaders have very recently prioritised the education of prisoners with low English and/or mathematics skills and those who speak English as an additional language. The use of part-time places has been increased to maximise the number of prisoners who can access education, skills and work (ESW). Occupancy rates for ESW are high, but the number of available places is low. Consequently, a significant proportion of the prison population is not gainfully occupied.

Leaders and managers have yet to implement a recovery plan that ensures prisoners can participate in an appropriate ESW curriculum. Progress to increase the range and variety of vocational training, such as catering, has been slow. The prison's two workshops remain closed despite the easing of the national COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and those imposed by HMPPS. Until very recently, the potential to deliver classroom-based learning has not been exploited. The prison has no employer links to inform curriculum development. Leaders and managers have not implemented an appropriate ESW strategy for the small minority of young offenders.

Prisoners have no access to the available information technology (IT) facilities. Curriculum planning has failed to give the adequate staffing and use of classroom-based IT classes sufficient priority. Consequently, prisoners have no opportunity to develop the digital skills needed for employment on release. The Virtual Campus is not in use. This hinders prisoners' learning and achievement, including those who are studying Open University and distance-learning courses.

Leaders and managers have rightly identified that the rate at which prisoners fail to complete their planned learning goals is too high. The prison is making good progress in ensuring that prisoners receive recognition for their partial achievements. The allocation of prisoners to accredited courses is not effectively informed by the available information.

Too many of the prisoners working on the accommodation units are underemployed. The prison places an over-reliance on unit-based officers selecting prisoners for roles. This practice is not closely linked to plans that support prisoners' rehabilitation and successful resettlement.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) arrangements are not effective. Prisoners receive in-cell IAG packs, but the return rates are low. The proportion of prisoners who have not received adequate initial IAG, including help through the use of face-to-face interviews, is high. Consequently, prisoners have not benefitted from the help they need to make informed and realistic decisions about their career options.

Few prisoners have received an appropriate induction to the full ESW curriculum. Induction packs do not include information on all the available activities. Too often during induction, prisoners' starting points and assessment needs fail to be checked effectively. However, prisoners who start an education course have their skill levels and support needs correctly identified.

In-cell learning packs are generally of a good standard. Prisoners value them, particularly those who have previously been disengaged from learning. Leaders and managers have responded well to prisoners' feedback by, for example, introducing basic French and Spanish language in-cell packs. Prisoners are provided with good-quality learning materials, such as coloured overlays or foreign-language dictionaries. Those completing in-cell packs receive appropriate additional learning materials. Teachers provide prisoners with appropriate 'through-the-door' teaching. However, this is not always frequent enough to meet prisoners' needs. Strategies to help prisoners catch up with their studies are effective.

Teachers provide prisoners with encouraging written and verbal feedback on their performance. Feedback usually identifies prisoners' spelling and grammar errors. However, not all teachers routinely give prisoners sufficient written guidance on how to improve their work or avoid repeating mistakes.

Education staff have a good understanding of prisoners' individual needs and use this information well to plan their lessons. For example, prisoners who find concentrating difficult have access to 'time-out' tables, away from the class. In the newly introduced classroom-based courses, teachers give prisoners effective learning support. However, education staff have only recently started collaborating effectively with other prison services, including the mental health team, to access specialist support.

Education staff have undertaken appropriate training programmes to improve their professional competence. Prisoner instructors have not received any ESW related training to help them develop in their coaching and training roles.

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers should rapidly implement a recovery plan that delivers a full ESW curriculum to meet the needs of the prison population.
- Prisoners should have access to IT training and facilities that help them to develop digital skills that contribute to successful rehabilitation and resettlement on release.
- Leaders and managers should introduce and implement effective IAG arrangements to ensure that all prisoners make informed and realistic career decisions.
- All prisoners should participate in a comprehensive and effective induction to the ESW provision that includes the identification of their starting points. Staff should use this information to plan and review prisoners' participation in relevant ESW that meets their needs fully.

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