

HMP Guys Marsh

Prison education standalone progress monitoring visit report

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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 12 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

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff swiftly put in place in-cell packs to enable prisoners to continue accessing learning, as well as distraction packs to keep prisoners occupied. Staff worked collaboratively to provide prisoners with meaningful activities in their cells. Leaders have continued to use in-cell packs for prisoners to study alongside other activities, such as work. The quality of in-cell work packs is good and provides prisoners with knowledge tests and challenging activities to keep them motivated and increase their knowledge. Prisoners spoken to found the in-cell packs useful and informative. They valued the certificates that they were awarded on completion of the workbooks.

Leaders recognise that there has been a reduction in purposeful activity during the COVID-19 pandemic and have now established clear plans to increase the education and work available to prisoners.

Leaders use labour market information well to understand the skills shortages in the local area and inform curriculum planning. They have developed strong links with industry partners, aligned to the six curriculum pathways in the prison, to make the curriculum relevant to prisoners. For example, they are working with a logistics company to develop qualifications in forklift driving, warehousing, and customer care, and they have created a driving academy to train prisoners to drive heavy goods vehicles.

Staffing shortages have resulted in some workshops and accredited qualifications not being taught as planned. For example, plastering and furniture-restoration workshops are not currently taking place. Managers have planned for prisoners to be able to complete accredited qualifications in most industry workshops to support them to gain employment on release. However, as a result of staff shortages, too many prisoners who attend work, for example in recycling and laundry, are not able to gain these qualifications. Where prisoners do achieve accredited qualifications, for example in brickwork, they are prepared well for progression into employment.

Managers have put in place a well-planned process for induction and to assess prisoners' skills and knowledge when they enter the prison. However, staff do not communicate clearly enough to prisoners how to access activities. As a result, too many prisoners do not understand what they need to do to enrol on a course or to be allocated to activities that will support them to progress towards their employment goals.

Managers monitor the quality of the provision carefully. They know the strengths and weaknesses and are taking actions to rectify the weak areas. As they return to full education, skills and work, managers are starting to evaluate the quality of teaching and monitor how well prisoners remain on their courses and achieve qualifications. They have plans to make more work part time to increase the number of men in work.

In education and vocational training, prisoners have detailed learning plans and targets, which help them to make good progress. Prisoners participate well in their lessons. They take part in discussions about relevant topics and write detailed and accurate notes about what they learn. Prisoners take pride in their work and most produce written work of a high standard. Prisoners in maintenance skills and brickwork build on their existing skills and learn new skills to industry standards.

Prisoners are appreciative of the support that they receive from tutors in lessons. Tutors provide prisoners with helpful verbal and written feedback on their work. Tutors correct prisoners' spelling on written work, but do not provide them with strategies to improve their spelling. As a result, prisoners continue to make the same errors. Tutors do not routinely challenge prisoners to explain or expand on their answers.

Leaders do not ensure that prisoners who need to improve their English and mathematics are able to do so. Although leaders assess prisoners' knowledge on their arrival at the prison, they do not provide sufficient opportunities for prisoners to attend lessons in these subjects and gain the qualifications they need.

Peer mentors assist new prisoners during induction in lessons, work and vocational training.

Prisoners with learning difficulties and disabilities do not have sufficient access to specialist support. Leaders identify prisoners' additional learning needs swiftly when

they enter the prison, and they share this information with tutors and instructors. However, staff do not have sufficient knowledge and training to know how to support prisoners with learning difficulties and disabilities to make good progress.

Recommendations

- Leaders must ensure that they recruit sufficient and appropriately skilled staff so that prisoners receive consistent high-quality teaching in education, skills and work and are able to gain relevant qualifications.
- Leaders must support the swift development of prisoners' English and mathematics skills once they enter prison. They must reduce how long prisoners wait to join a course in these subjects, ensuring that they achieve the qualifications that they need.
- Leaders must make sure that prisoners understand what education, skills and work are available to them and how these will help them to meet their career objectives.
- Tutors and instructors must support prisoners identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress in education, skills and work.

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