

HMP Leeds

Prison education standalone progress monitoring visit report

Name of lead inspector: Sheila Willis, Ofsted Inspector

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Address: 2 Gloucester Terrace
Stanningley Road
Leeds
LS12 2TJ

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 four 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

Senior leaders have responded well to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders are aware that some staff started working at the prison during the pandemic and are not familiar with how the prison will run when it operates as business as usual. They have a well-designed plan to train staff in how they can contribute to the prison's successful operation under stage 1.

Leaders have undertaken a full review of the education, skills and work curriculum. They have successfully used staff's and prisoners' feedback to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and how it can be improved. As a result, they have developed ambitious and forward-thinking plans to deliver meaningful activities that better meet the needs of the prisoners. Leaders encourage staff to try new approaches and not to be risk averse in the development of new ideas. For example, a gifted artist, who is an ex-offender from HMP Leeds and a trained listener, volunteers at the prison to teach art classes as a therapy for prisoners who are in crisis.

Through well-established links with employers, managers have planned new courses to broaden the curriculum and provide employment opportunities on release. These include a catering course run by a chef from the Clinks restaurant, new workshops for basic construction skills and Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards, and an ornamental bird rehoming centre for rescued birds, supported by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Leaders recognise the specific challenges that prisoners with short sentences face when attempting to rehabilitate. As part of a new way of working, leaders plan to introduce a specialist residential unit for these prisoners. The curriculum for these prisoners is designed to engage them in non-accredited activities as a stepping stone to further training linked to employment on release.

Leaders and managers have continued to provide prisoner inductions throughout the pandemic. Currently, information, advice and guidance (IAG) staff carry out face-to-face inductions with groups of prisoners or individually on the units. IAG staff gather information about prisoners' previous education, qualifications and work before they meet the new arrivals. They use this information effectively to allocate prisoners to courses that match their future career aspirations. The different agencies providing information and guidance to prisoners prior to their release do not coordinate their support effectively. As a result, interventions are sometimes duplicated and not sequenced well enough.

In industry workshops, instructors plan the development of prisoners' practical skills well to build their skills over time. For example, in the textiles workshops, prisoners start by learning basic sewing skills, such as threading the machine and sewing in straight lines. They go on to develop more complex skills, such as back tacking and overlocking.

In education classes, teachers give helpful feedback to prisoners on their work. However, teachers do not consistently set prisoners further work to practise or consolidate their knowledge and skills. For example, in mathematics and level 1 cleaning, prisoners receive feedback on improving the gaps or inaccuracies in their knowledge but do not then practise or consolidate their learning before moving on to a new topic.

Leaders do not ensure that the quality of work packs is consistently high. Prisoners on the IAG level 2 course use the information in the packs to develop their understanding of the referral process in the prison. By contrast, prisoners using the hospitality and catering work packs do not get the opportunity to practise or develop their knowledge and understanding sufficiently.

Too few prisoners on courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) receive support to improve their written and spoken English. Leaders rightly recognise that too few prisoners on these courses have access to classroom-based face-to-face learning and that in-cell work packs are inaccessible for those with no or very basic English skills.

Prisoners who have self-declared that they have an additional learning need are asked to complete an additional screening. This information is used to develop individual support plans. Instructors use this information to adapt prisoners' work roles in the workshops. Teachers adapt workbooks for prisoners by, for example, increasing font size or including fewer words on a page. However, prisoners who do

not declare an identified additional learning need are not routinely identified by leaders and managers.

Recommendations

- Leaders should ensure that all prisoners on ESOL courses receive face-to-face teaching to improve their levels of English.
- Teachers should assure themselves that prisoners consolidate their learning, knowledge and understanding before moving on to other topics.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that the different agencies providing support to prisoners prior to release coordinate their work to sequence it logically and avoid duplication of effort.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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