

HMP Durham

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 17 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

Leaders and managers have successfully sustained the rationale for the education, skills and work curriculum despite the disruptions and challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the high turnover of prisoners in a reception prison, many of whom are only there for a short time. They have designed a curriculum that helps to settle prisoners into the prison system as they arrive from the courts and prepares them for their next steps.

Leaders and managers have steadily increased the number of prisoners engaged in education, skills and work during the various phases of the pandemic. They implemented a range of successful strategies, such as the use of in-cell telephony and television and the kiosk system, to secure greater prisoner engagement in in-cell education.

Leaders and managers have provided purposeful employment to prisoners by keeping open all of the essential prison industries throughout the pandemic, such as waste management, warehousing and horticulture. When the prison entered the third stage of the recovery roadmap, those prisoners who wanted to work were found employment as cleaners and orderlies and in refurbishing the units.

Although leaders and managers have been successful in expanding the available opportunities for purposeful activity, they do not always ensure that prisoners are allocated to all the spaces available in education, skills and work. In education, all

spaces have been taken up. However, this is not the case in prison work and industries.

Leaders and managers have well-considered plans to expand the range of education, skills and work activities for prisoners when they are able to enter the second stage of the recovery roadmap. They plan to introduce new workshops for sewing and upcycling furniture for local charity shops as part of their aim to maximise the number of activities allowed under the restrictions.

Managers prioritise for an early return to face-to-face education those prisoners who need to improve their functional skills and foreign nationals who need to improve their English. Teachers run small group sessions and provide one-to-one support for these prisoners in rooms on the units. The first cohort of prisoners since the start of the pandemic have achieved their functional skills qualifications.

Teachers have designed good-quality in-cell packs that cover all the subjects in the curriculum that were available before the pandemic started. In face-to-face learning sessions, teachers give useful feedback to help most prisoners to improve their work. In vocational subject areas, such as barbering, teachers set prisoners effective targets to improve their use of English alongside their technical skills.

A few prisoners using the in-cell packs for English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) struggle to understand some of the concepts in the packs and continue to repeat mistakes. In a few instances, these are not identified and corrected by teachers.

Prisoners in essential industries use employment and training portfolios well to record the progress they make in developing employability skills. Prisoners acknowledge that completing the portfolios increases their self-confidence. Their portfolios provide them with a record of the employability skills they develop at work.

Prisoners who have recently arrived receive face-to-face information, advice and guidance sessions that enable them to make choices about education and employment relevant their next steps. Leaders and managers have recruited new staff to address the backlog of prisoners who arrived in the early stages of the pandemic and have not yet received formal information, advice and guidance.

Leaders and managers work effectively with other prisons within their regional group to ensure that prisoners are able to continue with the education courses and training that they started at the prison when they are transferred to another establishment within the group.

Staff effectively used the time during lockdowns when they were not allowed to have face-to-face contact with prisoners to upgrade their own professional expertise. For example, some staff gained qualifications in information, advice and guidance. This has led to improvements in the service they provide to prisoners when they prepare them for release or transfer to another prison.

Prisoners with additional needs who work in industries receive helpful support from a qualified member of staff based in the prison. In education, teachers are trained by an externally based specialist on the range of support they should give to prisoners. However, managers do not effectively evaluate the impact of the support that prisoners receive in education, skills and work.

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers should ensure that all the available spaces in prison work and industries are fully utilised.
- Teachers need to identify those prisoners who are struggling to understand the content of the in-cell packs in English, mathematics and ESOL and provide them with the face-to-face support that they need to make progress in these subjects.
- Managers should develop effective systems to evaluate the impact of the additional support that teachers give to prisoners in education, skills and work.

people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

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