

HMP/YOI Doncaster

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 11 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?

Significant progress

A high number of prisoners have engaged with education, skills and work activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because leaders have ensured that, as much as possible, activities remain open. Prisoners have been able to continue to work towards accredited qualifications. For example, waste management, textiles, recycling and industrial cleaning workshops have continued to deliver courses leading to qualifications. Mentoring programmes and qualifications such as first aid and customer service have also continued.

Managers responded to the first period of COVID-19 restrictions by quickly providing prisoners with learning packs, initially for English and mathematics, and later for some vocational subjects. These were of reasonable quality, and teachers provided individual support to learners, enabling 423 prisoners to achieve qualifications.

Throughout the pandemic, leaders and managers have used data from initial assessment well to identify the learning needs of the prison population. Managers worked swiftly to set up classrooms on the residential units very early on in the pandemic. This enabled them to reintroduce face-to-face English and mathematics lessons for small groups. Determined managers ensured that face-to-face lessons were also resumed after the second period of restrictions. Since then, almost 250 prisoners have enrolled on education courses. The relocation of classes to the accommodation units has raised participation by prisoners who were previously reluctant to join lessons with larger groups.

Managers are implementing detailed plans to expand participation, creating new teaching facilities and job roles. For example, a group of classrooms has been converted into small-scale workshops and shops where prisoners learn craft skills, such as woodworking, soft furnishings and electrical appliance repair, and sell the products that they make. During the pandemic, managers have created a considerable number of new job opportunities. These include many mentoring roles that provide opportunities for qualified prisoners to take on responsibilities and support their peers.

Managers have used local labour market information well to plan curriculum changes. For example, they introduced a qualification in textiles manufacture after research showed a rising demand for sewing skills in the Yorkshire area. They have developed links to a small number of local employers, to provide work experience and job interviews for prisoners on release.

Staff have benefitted from a useful programme of training during the pandemic. For example, they have developed skills for teaching remotely and for supporting their own mental health. Teaching staff have also undertaken training to improve the quality of developmental feedback that learners receive on their completed work.

Prisoners cannot yet access information and communication technology (ICT), such as computers, including the virtual campus. This hinders the development of their ICT skills and slows progress for prisoners on distance-learning programmes.

COVID-19 restrictions meant that some prisoners did not receive a full induction. However, managers have identified these prisoners and are making good progress in providing them with an appropriate induction and information, advice and guidance (IAG) on their career prospects.

At induction, prisoners now receive information and guidance about the most appropriate education, skills and work options among the current available offer. Tutors use this information to guide learners during their education courses, making suggestions about further future learning. Although prisoners do not yet receive follow-up reviews of their agreed career goals, managers have rightly prioritised offering careers advice to prisoners who are approaching release.

Teachers and trainers have adapted their teaching well to identify missed learning and learning gained through remote study. They use diagnostic assessment well to identify what prisoners already know and where the gaps in their knowledge are. Teachers then select the learning materials that best enable prisoners to build on existing knowledge. For example, in industrial cleaning, tutors check prisoners' recall of the learning they studied remotely and use this to plan further classroom lessons.

In English and mathematics classes, prisoners enjoy combining the completion of study packs with attending short teaching sessions. Learning packs are of good quality, and teachers add extra learning material where they identify a need for

additional reinforcement of learning. They provide good written and verbal feedback to prisoners. As a result, many prisoners rapidly complete these courses and go on to achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. Prisoners are very appreciative of the activities offered; some report that participating in learning during the pandemic has improved their motivation and self-confidence.

Leaders and managers have established good systems for identifying prisoners that need additional support throughout the prison. At induction, IAG staff refer those disclosing a learning disability or difficulty to learning support practitioners, who develop a learning support plan. Teachers, offender managers and mentors also make referrals for support when they identify any learning needs or difficulties in prisoners. Teachers use this information well to help these learners to succeed.

Leaders and managers make good efforts to support prisoners who experienced severe mental health challenges during the pandemic to enable them to continue learning. These prisoners have recently begun accessing a programme that has been specifically designed to help them with their mental well-being. Early indications highlight that prisoners on this course quickly move onto joining other education classes.

Recommendations

- IAG advisers should quickly restart regular reviews of the learning goals identified in prisoners' learning plans to ensure that prisoners are on track towards fulfilling their career aspirations.
- Managers should reopen the ICT learning facilities, including the virtual campus, as soon as possible within the context of COVID-19 restrictions.

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