

HMP Lancaster Farms

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 eight 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

During the national COVID-19 restrictions, leaders and managers had to reduce the education, skills and work provision available to prisoners, but ensured that they had access to in-cell learning packs in English, mathematics, construction skills, information technology (IT), catering, and creative arts. Leaders and managers deployed small teams of prisoners in essential work and critical workshops, such as cleaning and groundworks.

Roughly a third of prisoners have engaged in remote learning, and they have made good progress. Some learners in English and mathematics have completed enough booklets to progress to the next level. Learners have been able to access calculators and dictionaries. As tutors provided more individual support on the wings, prisoners completed more booklets and made better progress.

Through a combination of training opportunities for tutors and thorough quality assurance arrangements, managers have ensured that remote learning packs are of a good quality. For example, tutors have developed workbooks in electrical installation that build on previous learning and contain a balance of teaching new knowledge and checking existing learning. Tutors have developed workbooks for the construction industries, which improve prisoners' English and mathematical skills and introduce health and safety requirements well.

Tutors' written feedback on work packs is detailed and supports learners to make improvements to their work. Learners that inspectors spoke to were able to describe what they had learned while completing work packs.

Very recently, managers have been given permission to reintroduce face-to-face activities. Managers have promptly restarted classroom learning, prioritising mathematics, English, IT, and art. In addition, vocational courses such as catering, bricklaying, joinery, painting and decorating have been reinstated. For a few weeks, prisoners have been working in horticulture, packing, recycling, and waste management. About half of the prisoners are engaged in education training or work, either remotely or face to face.

Prisoners enjoy learning together again in classrooms, workshops, and industries. Tutors provide more immediate and individual support. In the recently reopened painting and decorating workshop, prisoners benefit from having completed the in-cell work pack on underpinning knowledge before starting the practical work. However, too few opportunities are available for prisoners to develop the knowledge and skills for self-employment.

Senior leaders have used the period of restrictions well to develop a clear and coherent strategy for education, skills and work, based on the latest labour market information for the region. Leaders aim to prepare prisoners for employment, based on a thorough induction, close working with prison offender managers, and courses linked to career ambitions. Managers have made good progress in introducing qualifications to underpin the industrial learning in the kitchens, gardens, and cleaning activities. Managers have supported staff in work and industries to gain teaching qualifications.

Managers have very clear, considered, and ambitious plans for the staged implementation of the full curriculum for all prisoners. However, they have not yet developed a formal curriculum for the personal development of prisoners. Prisoners can talk about personal development in relation to the specific requirements of their sentence plans, but not in the context of a broader education.

Managers are not effective in communicating and supporting opportunities for education and training above level 2. Very few prisoners are studying at level 3 or above.

Education and prison staff have worked collaboratively and effectively to ensure that prisoners have received advice and guidance on entry to and release from the prison. Managers have redesigned individual learning plans to ensure that previous learning is recognised, and future learning goals are targeted towards employment aims. Although it has been difficult for men to find employment on release, a small number of men have done so, including some rail operatives through the rail track scheme. Managers do not ensure that guidance is refreshed when prisoners change their plans mid-way through their time at the prison.

As prisoners return to face-to-face activities, tutors reassess prisoners' academic starting points and attitudes to work and study. They use this information to help prisoners to catch up with lost learning.

Managers have screened most prisoners to identify any additional learning needs. Experienced and specialist staff provide tutors with the relevant support strategies, which they use to provide prisoners with effective help. Tutors have adapted workbooks to include larger font, different-coloured paper, and simpler language and structure. Prisoners with specific needs that inspectors spoke to were making positive progress.

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers should act swiftly to further increase the number of prisoners who are engaged in education, skills and work.
- Leaders and managers should include personal development activities explicitly within the education, skills and work provision and ensure that prisoners understand what they are going to learn and have learned in this area.
- Leaders and managers should extend the curriculum to provide more opportunities for prisoners to study beyond level 2, and separately, to prepare them for self-employment.
- Leaders and managers should provide more flexible forms of advice and guidance to respond to changes in prisoners' career aspirations.

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