

HMP/YOI Isis

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 on site by Ofsted, without HMI Prisons. 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

Leaders have devised a well-considered recovery plan for education. They have accurately identified positive aspects of the enforced period of remote learning, such as how prisoners have better engaged with mathematics and English courses. Leaders have sensibly considered how to include these positive features within their curriculum as they resume a full programme of education. The return to classroom education includes a well-planned induction period to support prisoners back into group study.

In work and vocational training, leaders' recovery strategies are similarly well-considered. Leaders have put into place thorough training and assessment to check that prisoners can successfully complete essential work activities. Instructors carry out comprehensive 'taster' sessions with prisoners to prepare them for the imminent return to full work activities. Prisoners attend work and access vocational training courses at high levels, and work to a high standard. For example, prisoners who are studying level 2 food preparation qualifications produce high-quality dishes for the prison canteen.

Leaders carefully review the curriculum and make changes to benefit prisoners. They recently introduced a pre-entry level English course after identifying a greater prisoner need at this level. Leaders are also sensitive to the possible negative impact of planned changes to the curriculum as they move towards stage 2. They

understand the need to use prisoner data better, so that they can monitor the impact of curriculum changes effectively.

Teachers and instructors benefit from a comprehensive training and development programme. This includes courses on supporting prisoners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), as well as lesson planning and assessment. This has enabled instructors to support prisoners with LDD well during work activities. Teachers describe how training has developed their approach to helping prisoners reflect on their learning.

Specialist LDD-focused staff have devised comprehensive support plans to enable teachers and instructors to support prisoners with LDD effectively. These include useful strategies to help prisoners learn successfully. However, in a small number of cases, teachers are not aware of prisoners' LDD needs as they have not seen support plans.

During one-to-one teaching sessions, teachers explain and recap new topics well, and use questions skilfully to check what prisoners understand. In group teaching sessions, strategies to check learning are less effective. Teachers give prisoners useful comments on their written work to help them improve. However, in a minority of cases, teachers do not provide adequate guidance to prisoners so that they can make improvements to subsequent work.

While studying remotely, prisoners benefit from well-structured, appropriately challenging learning packs and valuable additional support. For example, prisoners who work as education representatives offer useful advice and support to their peers. Prisoners on distance-learning programmes use laptops in their cells to complete course work.

Leaders have introduced a thorough tracking process to secure a clear understanding of prisoners' progress while studying work packs. When prisoners complete mathematics and English work packs successfully, leaders prioritise them for additional revision support before their examinations.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders and managers have used appropriate processes to check on the quality of education and work. This includes, where appropriate, face-to-face observation activities as well as thorough sampling of completed work packs. Teachers receive useful developmental feedback on their teaching.

In a small minority of cases, prisoners have not been able to undertake a thorough induction to education, skills and work activities. Staff are working to reduce the backlog quickly. However, a few prisoners are rightly frustrated that it has taken too long for them to understand the options they have for work and training at the prison. This has impacted negatively on their levels of motivation. A small number of prisoners have, as a result of a slow induction process, remained unemployed for several months. Prisoners who are close to release also wait too long to receive

appropriate information, advice and guidance in relation to further study or employment.

Some prisoners rightly find that the documentation they receive during induction is too complicated. Sentences are overly long, and vocabulary is, at times, overly elaborate. This makes it difficult for some prisoners with low-level reading skills to fully understand the options available to them.

The pandemic has reduced opportunities for prisoners to engage with external employers or work opportunities, for example, through employer-led training or employer visits. Low numbers of prisoners are currently involved in these activities. Leaders are working to gradually restore previously strong links, and a small number of prisoners have been supported into employment following release. Currently, prisoners are not able to engage with opportunities to work or study via Release on Temporary Licence (RoTL).

Recommendations

- Leaders should ensure that there are greater opportunities for prisoners to work with employers, including via the use of RoTL, and gain employment opportunities.
- Leaders should ensure that all prisoners benefit from timely and appropriate information, advice and guidance about education courses and work opportunities, including through the prison induction.
- Teachers and instructors should ensure that they give prisoners guidance on their written work that helps them to make improvements to subsequent work.

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