

HMP Stocken

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 approximately 20 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 used the period during COVID-19 restrictions to develop and implement a clear and coherent strategy for education, skills and work. Since February 2021, the introduction of a part-time regime has allowed all prisoners to engage in purposeful activity for half of the core week. Leaders and managers have successfully reopened all workshops and reintroduced vocational training and classroom-based learning. Around half of prisoners attend these sessions and do so at a high rate. The prison is implementing well-considered plans to ensure that all prisoners participate in a full curriculum.

Leaders and managers effectively review the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of the prison population. For example, the motorbike maintenance course has ceased, and painting and decorating and barbering introduced. Managers have swiftly reinstated accredited qualifications. Consequently, they have sustained their mission to help prisoners develop the skills and behaviours needed for successful resettlement on release.

Managers effectively identify most prisoners' additional learning needs and/or disabilities. Tutors prioritise these prisoners appropriately for participation in face-to-face learning. This process includes those prisoners with education targets in their sentence plans and those who have fallen behind in their studies. Managers are quickly reducing the backlog of prisoners who have not had their additional learning needs and/or disabilities assessed. They have effective oversight of the quality of

support that prisoners receive and ensure that none are disadvantaged. For example, prisoners receive the relevant study resources, such as reading rulers, coloured overlays, and large-font text. The small number of learners who speak English as an additional language have appropriate support to allow them to attain rapidly.

In taught sessions, prisoners' completed work is mostly of a high standard, and prisoners make rapid progress in achieving their learning goals. In vocational subjects such as bricklaying, prisoners are inspired to aim for and achieve distinction grades. Learning resources are good and reflect industry requirements.

Managers use quality assurance processes to ensure that prisoners benefit from studying in-cell packs that are of a high standard. The packs link well to prisoners' learning and development plans. Tutors provide clear and useful written feedback to help prisoners identify what they have done well and how they can improve their work. In preparation for the move to stage 2 of the recovery roadmap, managers have significantly reduced the use of in-cell packs in favour of face-to-face education and vocational training.

Education tutors effectively check prisoners' English and mathematics skills development. They make sure prisoners receive the help needed to improve during participation in classroom sessions. However, support to extend prisoners' competence in using English and mathematics while working in production workshops and accommodation units is weak. Managers have yet to implement processes fully to promote and recognise the wider employment-related skills and behaviours that prisoners develop.

The large proportion of prisoners who work in the accommodation units are gainfully employed. They take pride in their work and its contribution to the creation of a conducive living environment. Prisoners receive appropriate training prior to commencing their roles. In a few cases, there is insufficient work to occupy prisoners, particularly unit cleaners. Workshop-based prisoners work diligently, and often to demanding commercial targets. A few prisoners in the breakfast packing workshop do not adhere to best hygiene practice.

Leaders and managers rightly acknowledge that the information, advice and guidance (IAG) service requires further development. During national restrictions, prisoners received IAG packs, but the return rates were relatively low. In addition, too few prisoners participated in an induction to the available education, skills and work. More individual IAG interviews and effective inductions are now taking place. However, there is still a significant backlog of prisoners who have not had appropriate help.

Education staff have participated in a suitably rich programme of professional development to enhance their professional practice. Prisoner instructors have received basic training to better support prisoners to make progress. However, the training does not focus sufficiently on developing instructors in their coaching and training roles.

Tutors effectively support prisoners who are pursuing Open University courses who have ready access to relevant resources, including information technology. However, few other prisoners have sufficient access to information technology. This, and the limited availability of the virtual campus, hinders prisoners' opportunities to develop vital digital skills for their future employability.

Recommendations

- Prison leaders must ensure that all prisoners are adequately supported to improve their English and mathematics skills.
- Prison leaders should ensure that, where relevant, prisoners' employment-related skills and behaviours are developed and recorded to support future career aspirations and employability.
- Prison leaders must introduce and implement suitable IAG arrangements so that all prisoners make informed and realistic career decisions.
- All prisoners should have access to information technology so that they can develop the digital skills they need for successful resettlement on release.

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