

HMP Hewell

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 five 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 COVID-19 pandemic national 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, personal development, catering, and health and safety. A small number of prisoners have gained qualifications. Leaders and managers deployed small teams of prisoners in essential work and critical workshops, such as cleaning and textiles.

Through remote learning, the participation of vulnerable learners has increased. While some learners have been able to access calculators, others have found it difficult to obtain dictionaries and textbooks. Some prisoners have been frustrated by the delays in requesting and receiving learning packs.

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 mathematics, which build on previous learning and contain a balance of teaching new knowledge and checking existing learning. Tutors on the food safety course have used in-cell television to showcase practical elements effectively, and this could have been applied more widely to other vocational subjects. Work packs are translated into their first language for some prisoners.

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

In the last month and since the restrictions began to be lifted by HMPPS, managers have promptly restarted classroom learning, prioritising mathematics, English, and support for prisoners who speak English as an additional language. In addition, vocational courses, such as catering, plastering, and industrial cleaning, have been reinstated. Leaders and managers have reintroduced the learning courses that promote life-skills development. Around a third 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 plastering workshop, prisoners benefit from having completed the work pack on underpinning knowledge before starting the practical work. Managers have established a designated space in the workshop for support with English and mathematics. Managers and tutors have made a positive start in developing a more holistic approach to the development of knowledge and skills.

The relatively new senior leadership team has used the period of restrictions well to develop an ambitious, clear, and coherent strategy for education, skills, and work. Leaders aim to prepare prisoners for employment, based on an extended induction, close working with prison offender managers, and courses linked to career pathways. Recent arrivals to the prison are benefitting from this new approach, and managers have ambitious plans to extend provision when restrictions are eased further.

Managers are starting to address the large backlog of prisoners who, due to the lockdown restrictions, have not received an induction, initial assessment in English or mathematics, or plan for their education, work, and skills. Managers do not currently have sufficient detail about the knowledge and skills deficits of these prisoners to establish strategies to ensure that these learners make up quickly for lost learning time.

Leaders and managers have already established links and agreed learning/work projects with employers and charities such as Greene King and Clean Sheet. Such opportunities, currently for a small number of prisoners, provide the knowledge and motivation required to gain employment and self-employment. Managers have detailed plans to expand participation, and to track employment outcomes on release.

Managers have produced high-quality and informative course prospectuses to inform prisoners punctually of the education choices that become available to them as the establishment progresses through the recovery stage.

However, managers are not effective in communicating and supporting opportunities for education and training above level 2. Too few prisoners are studying at level 3 or above.

Those prisoners who have completed a full induction have been screened for their additional learning needs and/or difficulties, although managers know that there is a backlog of prisoners who have not yet had their support needs assessed. A specialist provides tutors with the relevant support strategies, such as the use of a pen grip to make holding a pen easier. Tutors provide individual face-to-face support for some prisoners. Prisoners who the inspectors spoke to were making reasonable progress.

Managers do not routinely review the education, health and care plans for prisoners under the age of 25, nor request, where relevant, more specialist assessments. As a result, managers do not ensure that all support plans contain the relevant details to enable them to help prisoners.

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers must swiftly provide induction and initial assessments for the large number of prisoners who have missed these activities, so that managers can develop detailed skills plans to help prisoners to make progress.
- Managers must provide detailed support plans for the backlog of prisoners who have declared additional learning needs. Managers should consider requesting and responding to specialist assessments and education, health and care plans when developing the support plans.
- Leaders and managers should provide clearer information and more education and training opportunities for prisoners who already have level 2 qualifications.

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