

HMP Pentonville

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 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

During the national COVID-19 restrictions, leaders and managers had to limit most of the education, skills and work provision. Leaders swiftly put in place in-cell packs to support prisoners with their learning, as well as distraction packs.

Leaders and managers recognise that there has been a reduction in the practical activity taking place due to national restrictions. Most work at the prison has been maintained but with reduced numbers. For example, work in recycling, healthcare and textiles has only been available for a small number of prisoners. Most work is full time but managers have plans in place to make work part time so that more prisoners can participate.

Prisoners report that at the beginning of the pandemic the lack of places in education, skills and work affected their well-being negatively. As restrictions eased and education staff returned to visit the units, prisoners began receiving increased support with their in-cell learning. Managers have created learning hubs on the units for individual and small-group teaching. Prisoners value the increase in face-to-face teaching and appreciate the support that tutors give them. Prisoners have worked towards construction skills and distance-learning qualifications. Since the start of the pandemic, managers have provided prisoners with greater access to information technology to support their learning. For example, prisoners with low levels of English and mathematics can access learning materials on video players, and secure laptops have been made available for prisoners on distance-learning programmes.

Senior leaders have high aspirations for education, skills and work. They have put a detailed recovery plan in place, in readiness for stage 2 and moving back to full education, skills and work. They have set a clear priority for maximising the activities available to the prisoners and ensuring that they are well prepared for resettlement and employment.

Leaders understand the skills shortages in the local area, for example, in industrial painting and drylining. They use this knowledge to plan the curriculum. Leaders and managers have established good external partnerships to support prisoners to gain employment in these areas on release. For example, they work with construction companies so that prisoners can gain essential qualifications to work on building sites. Good links in hospitality industries provide prisoners with opportunities to work with reputable companies and gain relevant qualifications.

As a part of their induction, prisoners benefit from a comprehensive assessment of their education, skills and work needs. They receive detailed feedback on their induction assessments and the areas where they would benefit from additional support. As a result, staff are able to identify prisoners' individual learning needs and provide them with a detailed learning plan. However, prisoners do not have sufficient information about the education, skills and work opportunities available to them. Consequentially, they do not understand how the activities available will help them with their career aspirations. Staff recognise that prisoners need more detailed advice and guidance during their time in prison. They have plans in place to improve this, but they have not yet had sufficient time to benefit prisoners.

Tutors plan learning well so that prisoners gain new skills and knowledge. Prisoners in textiles learn how to use flat-bed sewing machines and overlockers. They understand how they can use their new skills on release. Tutors produce high-quality workbooks, which help prisoners to understand the topics that they are studying. Tutors review learning packs frequently, and adapt them to meet the needs of the prisoners. For example, they have made courses shorter so that the high proportion of prisoners on remand are able to complete courses prior to leaving the prison. Prisoners have a positive attitude to their studies and the proportion who complete their workbooks is high.

Tutors support prisoners well to develop their knowledge and use of English and mathematics. In textiles, prisoners' learning packs reinforce their practical work, such as measuring accurately and applying their skills to different garments. In criminology, prisoners engage in intellectual debates, such as the changing legal status of homosexuality. They learn to listen and respond to the views of others.

Leaders and managers do not provide good enough support to prisoners who need extra help with their studies. Prisoners complete an assessment so that staff can ascertain their learning difficulties and disabilities, but managers do not use this information well enough to support prisoners. Those prisoners with more complex

needs, such as behavioural difficulties, are not supported well enough. Staff do not have access to the resources required to meet prisoners' individual learning needs.

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers should increase swiftly the amount of face-to-face teaching that prisoners receive, so that prisoners become more motivated and are able to catch up on the practical work that they have missed.
- Managers should ensure that staff have a better understanding of prisoners' career aspirations and needs at induction and that they use this information to allocate prisoners to the most appropriate activities.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that prisoners' learning needs are identified, and that appropriate support is put in place quickly.

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