

HMP Liverpool

Prison education standalone progress monitoring visit report

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Visit dates: 14 and 15 September 2021

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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 had just started its first week in stage 2 of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Services' (HMPPS) recovery roadmap.

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 taken incremental steps to open up new activity places, while ensuring that staff and prisoners remain safe and healthy. As a result, the proportion of the prison population that has been able to access some form of purposeful activity rose from a third at the beginning of stage 3 of the roadmap to just over half by its end.

In preparing for the transition to stage 2 of the roadmap, leaders and managers have taken effective and timely action to change the shift patterns of staff to ensure that there are increased opportunities for prisoners to participate in purposeful activities during the working day. Leaders and managers plan to increase the number of prisoners that will be able to attend face-to-face education classes and industrial workshops. These workshops will be based on unit-based bubbles.

Leaders and managers have reflected on the lessons they have learned during the lockdown restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and amended their plans accordingly in order to become a resettlement prison. For example, they plan to refashion the curriculum so that it enhances prisoners' broader personal development through a mix of qualification courses, non-accredited learning and enrichment activities. Alongside this, leaders and managers recognise that work and education need to be combined more effectively.

Leaders and managers work well with the local city council and other partners to increase the workshop space available in the prison, with the view to developing training that meets the labour market and skills gaps created by the COVID-19 pandemic in the locality. They have well-advanced plans to open a training kitchen in partnership with a national charity. The kitchen aims to provide substantial vocational qualifications and support for prisoners, when released, to help them secure work in the catering and hospitality sector.

For prisoners who continue to attend a mix of classroom learning and in-cell education, managers and tutors have created good-quality education packs for all subject areas in the curriculum. They have adapted the curriculum to enable more prisoners to sample a wide range of subjects through short non-accredited courses. Tutors provide regular and useful feedback that enables prisoners to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Tutors have planned the sequencing of the curriculum well to ensure that prisoners who have completed in-cell education packs can apply some of the theoretical concepts they have learned when they return to practical sessions in the classroom. For example, prisoners on the level 2 painting and decorating qualification expressed their relief to the inspector that they could finally use real equipment and practise their skills in the workshop's painting bays.

Prisoners who are attending their first face-to-face sessions since these became available receive good support to ensure that they settle back into classroom activities. Tutors have drawn on the training that they have completed during the pandemic lockdowns to allay any anxieties and concerns that prisoners might have with increased personal contact.

Prisoners in industries such as the laundry, textiles and the leather shop complete regular reviews with their instructors that identify the employability skills they develop. Prisoners stated that going out to work at set times gave them a sense of personal worth and maintained their mental health. In education, tutors establish the starting points of prisoners accurately to help them develop skills that are relevant to their personal and employment goals.

Throughout the various stages of the pandemic lockdowns, prisoners have benefited from a wide range of imaginative enrichment activities, both in-cell and face-to-face. For example, prisoners who were struggling with their mental health engaged with a video project to reflect their ideas on core values such as freedom and personal responsibility.

Initial information, advice and guidance interviews carried out as part of induction do not contain sufficient information to help plan relevant purposeful activities that will assist prisoners to achieve their next steps. Information, advice and guidance staff have persisted for too long with carrying out interviews over in-cell telephones, with very little follow-up to collect missing information. As a result, those involved in the

allocations process do not know enough about prisoners' previous occupations, qualifications and stated career ambitions.

Managers have been too slow to reintroduce face-to-face assessments of prisoners' support needs. Although all prisoners complete an in-cell rapid screening assessment, too few prisoners have received in-depth assessments during stage 3. Managers suspect that this lack of face-to-face contact has resulted in some prisoners' support needs being missed.

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers should ensure that information, advice and guidance staff conduct face-to-face interviews with prisoners so that they can collect a complete set of information to better inform the allocations process for purposeful activities.
- Leaders and managers need to ensure that more prisoners undertake face-to-face in-depth assessments to identify any needs for specialist support.

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