

HMP/YOI Norwich

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. 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 19 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 maintained essential workshops for prisoners during the period of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in the printshop, textiles and market gardens. A broad range of face-to-face activities were reintroduced in work and education from April 2021. Managers' health and safety risk assessments were thorough, and necessary safety steps were put in place.

Managers communicated well with prisoners from the early stage of the pandemic and promoted the wide range of in-cell learning options available. These actions encouraged prisoners to participate. Prison instructors, authorised to work on residential units, liaised well with education staff in ensuring prisoners received a level of first-hand support when undertaking learning packs.

A good proportion of prisoners has engaged in some form of education, training or workshop on a part-time basis since April. Managers, therefore, have utilised well the limited capacity that COVID-19 guidance permits. They have made it possible for prisoners to combine work with part-time education, which has increased participation.

However, attendance fluctuates in education and is often too low. It has been better in workshops. Managers are well aware of the reasons for lower attendance, the major factor being a shortage of operational staff. They are attending to these issues in readiness for the full reinstatement of the curriculum.

Leaders' recovery plans for education, skills and work are comprehensive and include accommodating an increasing number of prisoners when permitted to do so.

As restrictions eased, managers ensured that prisoners could gain formal and informal accreditation within education and across a range of workshops, such as warehousing and textiles. A personal development curriculum relates specifically to well-being and resilience, the focus of which has supported some prisoners well with the challenges faced during lockdown.

Managers and experienced instructors provide well-organised workshops in which prisoners learn new skills and have the opportunity to progress, where appropriate, to become orderlies. The quality of the work in market gardens is high and the flower beds boost morale across the prison. Throughout the restrictions, prison managers have continued to work with Railtrack and a third of prisoners on that programme have gained employment.

Most education programmes and work areas implement a rich and varied curriculum that considers prisoners' starting points. They feature well-designed, relevant learning materials that are reflective of the prisoners' backgrounds. However, a few courses concentrate too much on examination preparation and assessment, and the content of the learning resources is not directly relevant to the prisoners. There is not sufficient time allocated to teaching prisoners who speak English as an additional language, including face-to-face support on this subject.

Face-to-face induction sessions have recently been reintroduced. They are well planned and comprehensive, and include positive aspirational messages that are clearly linked to curriculum pathways and based on recent local job market information.

Managers have continued to assess and support prisoners who are in education and training and have additional learning needs. Support has been provided in innovative ways, such as through CD learning materials and specific in-cell packs which reflect prisoners' needs. When practical, teachers provide effective outreach support on residential units for those prisoners with additional needs.

Most in-cell packs are well designed and at the appropriate level. Teachers provide detailed feedback on what prisoners need to do to improve. On a very few occasions, the language used in packs is too complex for prisoners to understand. There are too few opportunities in in-cell packs for extended writing to expand prisoners' learning further.

During the restrictions, managers continued to provide opportunities for prisoners, as appropriate, to work outside of the prison under licence. They were able to work in essential areas such as food production. With the easing of restrictions, prison managers have moved to a position where nearly all eligible prisoners are employed outside of the prison.

A new information, advice and guidance (IAG) provider has recently been commissioned, but it is too early to assess its effectiveness. The prison's employment worker and IAG staff have engaged actively with local employers. Staff have succeeded in matching a good and increasing number of prisoners to jobs on release.

Prisoners are made aware of options to undertake distance learning through a small Open University and Prison Education Trust offer. However, uptake is relatively low and remained static during restrictions. The generally short-stay nature of the prison restricts eligibility.

Recommendations

- Ensure that more prisoners engage in education, skills and work as the easing of restrictions continues. In particular, ensure that prisoners attend and engage well in education activities.
- Allocate more time to ensure that learners who speak English as an additional language have sufficient face-to-face teaching and support.
- Improve the in-cell learning packs to ensure they focus more on learning, using language that is accessible by all prisoners and learning resources that prisoners find helpful.

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