

HMP Whatton

Inspection dates:

9 to 12 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Information about this prison

HMP Whatton is a Category C training public prison in Nottinghamshire holding convicted male prisoners. It fulfils a national function of providing services that seek to address the offending behaviour of prisoners convicted of a sexual offence. At the time of the inspection, there were 810 prisoners in the setting. Nearly a quarter of the prison population serve a prison sentence of one to two years. A third of the prisoners serve sentences of two years or more. Prisoners held at Whatton come from across the country and about two thirds are over the age of 40. The prison education provider (PEF) at HMP Whatton is People Plus. The prison uses its dynamic purchasing system (DPS) budget to provide additional training and support for its prisoners. These include People Plus, Carer's Federation, Debt Plus, Safer Living Foundation, Geese Theatre and Special Interest Course.

What does the prison do well and what does it need to do better?

The senior leadership team has recently been appointed to their posts. They have undertaken a detailed review of the education, vocational training and commercial work on offer to the prisoners. However, it is too early to see the impact of all the actions they have taken to improve the curriculum and its quality.

Leaders and managers have developed an effective curriculum in education and vocational training that meets the interests of the prisoners. However, they do not ensure that instructors who teach commercial work promote high aspirations for prisoners. The workshops lack clear and demanding goals for the prisoners. For example, prison instructors are not aware of the minimum requirements for English and mathematics to join the textiles workshop. There are very few opportunities for prisoners in commercial work to progress into roles with additional responsibilities. In areas where there are mentoring roles, such as gardens, the availability of these roles and the criteria required for them are not widely shared with prisoners. As a result, most prisoners do not know about them and do not aspire to these roles.

Leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum addresses national employment needs. Education managers prepare prisoners well based on their crime, career choices and release timetable. For example, prisoners are mandated to study English and mathematics qualifications based on their starting points. They have access to a choice of qualifications which are recognised by employers. They can gain qualifications in several vocational areas, including construction, engineering, business and entrepreneurship, horticulture, hospitality and waste management. This helps them to improve their life and employment chances upon release.

Leaders and managers ensure that there are sufficient places in education, training and commercial work for prisoners. They encourage prisoners to be proactive in applying for these activities. As a result, a significant majority of prisoners are engaged in purposeful activities.

Prison leaders and managers provide appropriate support to help prisoners resettle into society upon release. For example, Safer Living Foundation help older prisoners learn about independent living and budgeting. This helps prisoners gain confidence and practical skills which helps them to better reintegrate into society.

Prison leaders and education managers accurately identify improvements they need to make to education and training they offer. However, they do not consistently monitor the effectiveness of the actions taken. For example, managers do not carefully check if staff educate prisoners about values such as respect and rule of law or how it impacts their personal lives.

Leaders and managers use effective performance management actions to help tutors and trainers improve their teaching techniques through focused and personalised training plans. However, recent staff turnover and the newness of some

of these actions are yet to show the full impact on the quality of education, training and commercial work.

The allocations process is effective. Managers ensure that a significant majority of prisoners participate in activities. Furthermore, prisoners are allocated their choice of work swiftly once they make an application and complete their induction programme. However, prison managers do not check that these activities meet the interests and employment goals of the prisoners. Managers do not link education, training and work to the sentence plans of the prisoners. On a number of occasions, prisoners do not receive effective advice and guidance to help them choose a sector where they can develop their knowledge and skills. This means that prisoners are unclear about how they would benefit from the education and training they receive to improve their employment chances.

The main prison education framework provider, People Plus, provides well-designed education and training courses for the prisoners. Tutors and trainers use their subject specialist knowledge expertly to deliver their sessions. As a result, prisoners who attend education and training learn new knowledge and skills and successfully achieve their qualifications. However, tutors and trainers do not actively teach prisoners about the importance of fundamental British values.

Managers ensure that tutors, trainers and instructors participate in ongoing and relevant training sessions to help improve their teaching techniques. For example, staff attend training sessions on how to support prisoners with learning difficulties and disabilities effectively. Furthermore, they have had training on how to set and review learning targets and measure learner progress for prisoners. However, leaders and managers do not ensure that staff update their specialist academic and vocational knowledge frequently.

Prison leaders ensure that the pay policy is appropriate and fair. Prisoners who attend education and training receive the same pay as their peers who are in commercial work. Furthermore, prisoners are encouraged to take on additional roles and responsibilities to earn more pay. However, prisoners who are mentors do not receive additional pay for their enhanced roles.

Leaders have very recently put in place a new prison-wide reading strategy. They are currently trialling a new phonics-based reading assessment. Although this initiative is very new, current feedback from prisoners is positive. Prisoners can access a range of books which builds in difficulty, word spacing and text size. Functional skills tutors encourage prisoners to read by suggesting appropriate books for them to access via the library. However, most of these interventions are very new and it is too early to see the impact of them. There is no plan in place to develop prisoners' reading skills in industries.

Tutors, trainers and instructors do not identify and provide timely support to prisoners with learning difficulties and disabilities. For example, prisoners who study short courses, do not benefit from receiving personalised support to meet their learning needs. As a result, prisoners do not achieve their full potential on these

courses. However, when prisoners receive appropriate support, they achieve better than their peers.

A significant minority of tutors, trainers and instructors do not mark prisoners' written work effectively. Additionally, they do not provide meaningful and developmental feedback. For example, English tutors fail to identify and correct appropriate use of capital letters and question marks. As a result, prisoners do not learn how to improve their written work.

Most prisoners successfully complete their courses and gain relevant skills to prepare them for life after release. For example, most prisoners who attempt English and mathematics examinations, pass first time. Furthermore, prisoners who study bookkeeping and business courses develop skills that helps to enhance their self-employment opportunities.

Prisoners benefit from a calm atmosphere in classrooms, workshops and commercial work areas that helps them to learn. For example, prisoners in painting and decorating workshops, keep the workshop clean and tidy. They tidy up their work areas without prompting at the end of the session. Furthermore, several prisoners in the textile workshop are extremely motivated. When waiting for further work from their instructors, prisoners find ways to keep themselves busy by sharing their knowledge and skills. For example, supporting prisoners with their English or training them on how to use a new piece of equipment. As a result, prisoners are motivated and eager to learn and work.

Most prisoners feel safe at work. Prisoners in workshops follow appropriate health and safety practices. They use the required personal protective equipment and use tools appropriately. For example, in the textiles workshop, prisoners in charge of cutting follow safe working practices. They are trained in the use of the equipment, and they can confidently identify safety equipment, such as metal gloves, and what to be aware of when using each piece of equipment, such as the straight knife cutting machine.

Relationships among prisoners and staff are positive and respectful. Tutors are skilled in helping prisoners to concentrate and apply themselves in lessons. Prisoners support each other effectively in lessons and work areas. They listen to their peers' contributions and provide supportive feedback. For example, in gardens, more experienced prisoners provide useful advice to prisoners new to the work area.

Attendance and punctuality are high in education, training and commercial workshops. Most prisoners value these opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. Leaders and managers diligently track and monitor attendance. When prisoners do not attend a session, managers follow this up with prison officers to identify the reasons why. In most cases, reasons for non-attendance are sickness or healthcare appointments.

Prison leaders and managers recognise that prisoners do not benefit from a consistently high standard of career advice and guidance. Prisoners report that there

is inconsistent and insufficient information about what education and training is available at the prison. Many prisoners find out about the offer available to them from other prisoners who have done these courses or from individual education or prison staff once they have enrolled on other courses. Too many prisoners either 'self-select' or are mandated to do courses against their wishes.

Leaders have very recently overhauled the initial advice and guidance prisoners receive. They now use a more thorough process to establish prisoners' starting points, previous work experience, and short and long-term goals. They are now able to link education, training and commercial work to prisoners' sentence plans and what they want to do on their release. However, it is too early to see the full impact of leaders' actions.

Leaders do not ensure the curriculum includes a sufficient focus on prisoners' development of digital skills and how these are so important for them on their release. Prisoners feel deskilled and ill-prepared for life on release, both in terms of their employment prospects and their personal lives.

Leaders and managers do not prepare prisoners for life in modern Britain sufficiently. Prisoners are not taught about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Prisoners' understanding of these issues is not secure.

Social club activities, which used to be available before the national pandemic, have not fully restarted for all prisoners. There are very limited opportunities for prisoners to get involved in activities to develop their specific interests. These tend to take place at particular times of the year, such as competitions around Christmas time, rather than being regularly scheduled.

Leaders offer effective programmes to support older prisoners' mental health and well-being and to prepare them for their release. These include arts and craft, music and cookery. Such courses aim to develop prisoner's confidence and independence.

What does the prison need to do to improve?

Priority concerns

Prison and education leaders do not make rapid improvements to the quality of education, training and commercial work.

They accurately identify the areas that need improvement, but do not ensure that actions are completed and improvements are made.

Concerns

Leaders and managers do not ensure that education, training and commercial work meets the interests and employment choices of the prisoners.

Staff allocate activities to prisoners in a timely manner. However, prisoners are not sure how these activities will help them improve their knowledge, skills and employment chances on release.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that prisoners receive meaningful career advice and guidance from prison staff.

Prisoners are not clear about the available education, training and commercial work opportunities or how they can access them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	52343
Address	New Lane Whatton Nottingham NG13 9FQ
Contact number	01949 803200
Governor	Caroline Vine
Provider type	Prison
Date of previous inspection	15–26 August 2016
Main subcontractors	People Plus Carer's Federation Debt Plus Safer Living Foundation Geese Theatre Special Interest Course

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the learning and skills manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report or monitoring visit letter. The inspection was carried out using the Handbook for inspecting education, skills and work activities in prisons and young offender institutions.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-education-skills-and-work-activities-in-prisons-and-young-offender-institutions-eif>

Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising prisoners' work, seeking the views of prisoners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the prison's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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