

# HMP Long Lartin

Prison education interim visit report

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## Interim visit

### Ofsted context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all Ofsted routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out interim visits to prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs). Interim visits aim to help prisoners, parents, employers and government understand how establishments are meeting the needs of prisoners during this period, including prisoners with special educational needs and disabilities. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

### **What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of prisoners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?**

Leaders and managers placed a high importance on ensuring that prisoners accessed education, skills and work activities. Initially, prisoners received 'distraction' packs that contained puzzles and games. Managers acknowledged that these were not sufficient to provide meaningful learning for the prison population. They worked closely with the education provider to make sensible adaptations to the existing curriculum. Consequently, prisoners completed bespoke, in-cell work packs that matched the usual classroom learning plans.

Leaders and managers acknowledged that formal engagement in educational activities was slow initially. However, they reported a steady increase in prisoner participation. Completion of the work packs was high, although all courses were unaccredited due to the difficulty in providing examinations under the current lockdown. At the time of the visit, tutors were unable to visit prisoners on the wings due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the prison.

Leaders had devised safe ways for approximately a fifth of the prison population to continue with part-time work activities on the wings, for example cleaners, painters and library orderlies. However, prisoners employed in the industry workshops had not been to work for almost a year due to the national restrictions. They had not received support to maintain their industrial knowledge and skills through in-cell activities, although many had engaged with the education work packs.

Senior leaders recognised the importance of restarting face-to-face learning as soon as national restrictions permitted. However, they had yet to finalise their strategy. Managers had reviewed the classroom accommodation to ensure that they could provide face-to-face learning safely when restrictions were lifted. They planned to mix classroom and in-cell learning to compensate for reduced classroom capacity.

Leaders and managers felt that the pandemic had resulted in increased collaboration across the prison. Tutors valued the support that they received from wing officers, who helped to ensure that learning packs were returned to them regularly.

The small number of prisoners we spoke to told us that they found the in-cell learning packs useful. However, they found the lack of tutor contact challenging, especially when they needed additional support. Prisoners also said that peer support on a few wings was limited due to mentors prioritising their own needs resulting from restricted time out of their cells. A few prisoners told us that they found the non-accreditation of courses frustrating and that their motivation to complete the packs was, therefore, low. Where learning was supplemented through the prison television channel, a few prisoners said that these programmes were not always aired at a convenient time. For example, they clashed with association time.

**What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of prisoners?**

Leaders and managers had implemented a detailed quality assurance process to monitor the quality of the new, in-cell curriculum. They also completed quality checks on the work packs. They took account of prisoners' feedback on how work packs met their needs. Managers met frequently to agree and implement actions to improve areas of concern.

Teaching staff felt supported by managers. In education, tutors had attended a wide range of training activities to help them implement the in-cell curriculum. They felt that the quality of their written feedback on prisoners' work had improved because they were unable to see prisoners face to face.

Tutors used the assessment of prisoners' work to identify the knowledge, skills and behaviour that prisoners needed to develop. This enabled them to set more challenging tasks that developed prisoners' knowledge and skills further. Tutors set prisoners individualised targets in their work packs. However, for prisoners who spoke English as a second language, tutors found it difficult to explain what words should look and sound like using a written work pack. They had developed more visual resources to help these prisoners understand key concepts, although they did not progress through the packs as quickly as their peers.

Tutors and managers did not have a detailed understanding of how well prisoners retained knowledge and skills. They recognised that they would need to assess prisoners fully on their return to face-to-face learning to identify any gaps in their knowledge and skills. Tutors were planning additional support activities to help prisoners who had fallen behind in their learning to catch up.

Managers had recently employed new staff to offer prisoners advice and guidance on their next steps and further learning. Managers told us that this was more effective

for new prisoners. In education, existing prisoners could access advice and guidance, although fewer had engaged with the service.

## **Next steps**

- Leaders should finalise their plans to resume face-to-face education, skills and work activities quickly to enable as many prisoners as possible to access activities safely and swiftly when restrictions are lifted.
- Leaders and managers must implement swiftly a safe and timely approach to providing prisoners with appropriate, additional support on the wings.
- Leaders should support prison instructors to plan a seamless return to work for prisoners in the workshops. They must identify any extra training and support prisoners need to enable them to be effective at work.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all prisoners are fully aware of the educational opportunities available to them. This should include information regarding the benefits of non-accredited learning and how in-cell work packs are aligned to qualifications for when they resume face-to-face learning.
- Leaders and managers need to ensure that prisoners who speak English as a second language have priority when allocating prisoners to face-to-face lessons in the near future. Tutors need to assess thoroughly what knowledge and skills these prisoners have retained. They will also need to plan and teach appropriate activities that help prisoners who have fallen behind to catch up.

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