

HMP High Down

Prison education interim visit report

Name of lead inspector: Lynda Brown, Her Majesty's Inspector

Visit date(s): 23-24 February 2021

Address: Sutton Lane
Sutton
Surrey
SM2 5PJ

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). The visit was conducted by Ofsted alone (not alongside HMI Prisons). The visit was conducted fully remotely.

Interim visits aim to help prisoners, employers and government understand how establishments are meeting the education and skills 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 have maintained prisoners' learning as a high priority during the pandemic. They have responded flexibly to the changing national restrictions so that prisoners can continue with their education, skills and work. Managers state that they have planned a curriculum based on the needs of learners and the local employment opportunities. For example, they have developed rail track courses in response to High Speed 2 (HS2) and Crosslink developments.

Managers introduced in-cell education packs at the start of the pandemic, so that prisoners could re-engage in education when restrictions were eased. Where subcontractors did not produce in-cell learning packs swiftly, managers secured other providers promptly to meet the requirements of learners. Leaders recognise that the collection and return of in-cell packs has been slow, but is improving now that teachers and trainers are allowed onto prisoners' residential blocks.

Managers have deployed tutors to teach subjects differently during the pandemic. For example, construction staff have taught knowledge associated with the construction skills certification card (CSC), so that prisoners can take the examination once they return to learning. Since the start of the pandemic, managers have reduced the food hygiene course to a one day non-accredited course so that more prisoners can take it and access work in the prison.

Leaders and managers have adapted much of their education curriculum to in-cell learning so that prisoners can access learning during lockdown. They recognise that in some areas, for example in the call centre, they have not been able to develop meaningful in-cell packs.

Managers have provided teachers and trainers with professional development opportunities during the pandemic. For example, they have developed tutors' digital

skills to improve their use of technology in the classroom and when working remotely.

Leaders and managers have established clear plans for reintroducing the fuller education, skills and work curriculum. They are prioritising the return of face-to-face teaching with small groups of learners and reintroducing qualifications. Managers report that they will continue to teach part of the curriculum remotely to prisoners who have benefitted from learning this way.

The small group of prisoners that we spoke to appreciate the in-cell education packs that they have received. Prisoners state that they have support from their tutors in completing their work using the in-cell telephone and television. Prisoners enjoy being able to learn at their own pace through the in-cell packs. Those prisoners who held high level qualifications prior to entering prison, have not always found the education they have received during lockdown sufficiently challenging.

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?

Managers have prioritised essential work, so that prisoners can continue their employment, for example in recycling, textiles and laundry. In textiles, prisoners have supported the Covid-19 effort by making non-surgical scrubs. Learners are positive about their contribution to the national cause. However, managers have had to decrease the number of learners in work to conform to social distancing rules.

Tutors recognise that learners have not been able to develop practical skills during the pandemic. Where it has not been possible to deliver practical workshops tutors have adapted learning content to create in-cell work packs. Teachers have planned in-cell learning packs so that they teach the knowledge prisoners require to improve their practical skills and take their qualifications once restrictions are eased.

Most work packs are of an appropriate level for learners and include a range of activities such as reading, comprehension and extended writing tasks. Teachers' feedback to learners at times, is too cursory and purely affirms good work while other feedback gives clear guidance on how learners can improve their work.

At the start of the pandemic managers moved learners to part-time work, which allowed them to work and participate in education. Learners who were not confident to participate in classroom learning, have found in-cell learning more suited to their needs. They appreciate being able to learn at their own pace. Vulnerable prisoners have benefited from access to a broader range of courses through the remote delivery model.

Managers recognise that there are challenges for learners who speak English as an additional language to engage in learning. Many of these learners require greater

support with their in-cell learning packs. Managers have put in place more robust mechanisms to identify English support needs swiftly at induction.

Next steps

Leaders and managers should support face-to face and remote learning to ensure that more prisoners can access education, skills and work and to enhance their learning experience.

Managers should improve the quality of the feedback that learners receive on their work, so that they are clear about what they need to do to improve and develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject they are studying.

Leaders and managers should increase support for learners who speak English as an additional language, so that they can improve their English skills.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020