

HMP Lowdham Grange

Prison education interim visit report

Name of lead inspector: Rebecca Perry, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection date(s): 19-20 January 2021

Address:

Old Epperstone Road
Lowdham
Nottinghamshire
NG14 7DA

Interim visit

Context and focus of visit

1. 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 education and skills training needs of prisoners during this period, including prisoners with special educational needs and disabilities. They also help to identify what next steps are needed as prisons start to return to full education and skills programmes, taking into account the need to ensure safety throughout. 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?

At the time of the visit, leaders faced increased challenges at the prison due to a recent large outbreak of COVID-19 cases within the population. Staff and prisoner anxiety was heightened as a result. Leaders kept prisoner wellbeing through education at the forefront of their COVID-19 response.

Leaders recognised that they had been too slow to reinstate a broad curriculum. Managers prioritised the delivery of English, mathematics and wellbeing programmes. They had broadened the offer recently to include more courses, including additional art programmes. The proportion of men engaging in education had increased during the pandemic. However, too few prisoners had their new skills and knowledge accredited.

Leaders had closed many vocational and work areas due to outbreaks on site. Managers had amended the allocations process to provide fair opportunities for some prisoners to work safely in gardens, recycling, kitchens and textiles.

Leaders ensured that prisoners had access to activities that provided important links to their families and the community. Nearly three quarters of the prison population engaged in activities such as creating video messages for their families.

Leaders made effective use of technology, such as in-cell television and telephony, to support prisoners with their learning. Staff used prisoners' requests for specific topics of interest, such as art, history and nature to create themes for distraction packs.

Managers recognised that prisoners with poor English skills, including those for whom English is not their first language (ESOL), were most adversely affected by the pandemic. They identified a lack of specialist support for this group of prisoners.

Leaders had not provided prisoners with effective careers, advice and guidance. Managers recently had their business case for external advice and guidance approved but this had not yet commenced.

Managers effectively amended the curriculum offer to help contribute to resources needed by the national health service (NHS) resulting from the pandemic. In addition, they had plans to extend the curriculum further after the pandemic. This included preparation for self-employment through the business curriculum and additional vocational programmes, such as horticulture and barbering.

The small group of prisoners we spoke with said that they enjoyed completing education work packs in their cells. They were highly motivated to learn new skills and understood the importance of their learning in relation to their resettlement goals. Most prisoners hoped that aspects of in-cell learning would continue after the pandemic. Tutors felt that prisoners had become more polite, respectful and enthusiastic about learning during the pandemic. Prisoners' productivity had improved, particularly in textiles workshops.

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?

Tutors adapted their teaching approaches to use in-cell work packs to better match prisoners' needs given the pandemic-related restrictions. Work packs were well-designed, informative and included a range of activities. However, they contained a lot of text which was difficult to read by prisoners with low level reading skills.

Workshop instructors used tailored worksheets effectively to help prisoners develop their skills for their specific job roles. A few prisoners gained their performing manufacturing operations qualifications.

The NHS contract for scrubs and protective equipment led to an expansion of textiles work. Prisoners and staff were proud of their support for the NHS through these workshops. More prisoners were able to quickly develop new skills in sewing.

Managers recognised that some very recently introduced programmes were too new within the curriculum offer to have had an impact. These included painting and decorating, theory and money management courses.

Managers recognised the need to improve support for prisoners with a learning difficulty or disability. Tutors were not aware of the learning needs for a significant proportion of prisoners.

Tutors' tracking of prisoners' progress was too varied. Managers could not accurately monitor the skills and knowledge gained by prisoners through education, skills and

work activities. Managers and tutors acknowledged that quality assurance was informal and lacked rigour.

Most tutors' feedback to prisoners did not focus sufficiently on the knowledge and skills that prisoners gained, and how to develop these further. Where tutors set targets for prisoners, many were vague, making it difficult to assess progress against curricular goals. However, prisoners demonstrated good skills and knowledge within art and personal and social development programmes.

Leaders and managers ensured all staff completed infection control training at the start of the pandemic. They provided training for tutors on embedding English and mathematics skills across the curriculum and on becoming more aware of prisoners' mental health issues.

Next steps

Leaders and managers need to ensure that learners with ESOL needs, and those with lower levels in English, are effectively supported to improve their skills.

Managers and tutors must ensure that learners with a learning difficulty or disability are promptly identified and appropriately supported to make good progress.

Managers must rigorously check the quality of tutors' work to ensure that they are implementing the planned curriculum effectively.

Leaders must ensure that effective careers advice and guidance is available for all prisoners so that they are able to make informed choices about their careers both inside prison and upon release.

Leaders and managers must recognise the new skills and knowledge that learners achieve through in-cell learning and other activities and accredit them as appropriate.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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 2021