

HMYOI Feltham

Prison education interim visit report

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Interim visit

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 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?

Leaders and managers had ensured that children accessed between 12 and 15 hours of face-to-face education and skills related activities from the early stages of lockdown. Managers supplemented this through educational packs for children to complete in their rooms. The majority of children spoken to during the visit had received these packs and found them useful.

Leaders and managers had designed a way of delivering learning, based on 'bubbles' of four, that made children feel safe. Managers stated that there had been a significant reduction in poor behaviour and that children were more willing to engage in education.

Managers had continued to provide the majority of planned courses to children during the lockdown. Due to the limited access to vocational workshops during the lockdown restrictions, staff had introduced a range of additional courses covering vocational theory. For example, children in barbering had been able to complete a level 2 course in the prevention of dermatitis. Since being able to return to practical sessions children had made good progress in developing their practical skills.

Managers had been able to provide children with careers advice shortly before their release. However, too many children spoken to during the visit did not know what they wanted to do. Due to the lateness of the career's advice provided, staff were unable to support children to gain the skills and qualifications needed to progress into their chosen career.

Leaders and managers had continued to observe teachers delivering lessons to assure themselves of the quality of teaching and learning that children received. Leaders and managers had a good understanding of the quality of education offered.

Managers ensured that children with additional learning support needs received effective help from learning support assistants (LSA) outside of their group sessions. Managers had maintained the support from qualified speech and language professionals for children who needed access to it. However, managers had identified that they urgently needed to recruit staff to ensure that they provide sufficient support to all learners when the number of children increases in the establishment in the future.

The group of children interviewed by inspectors welcomed the continued access to education. They described some of the new skills that they had developed, such as washing and plaiting hair and using clippers in barbering. In catering, children talked confidentially about the importance of minimising food contamination.

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?

Teachers had benefitted from a well-considered programme of training to develop their teaching skills. For example, training on special educational needs and psychology was increased so that they could better understand and meet the needs of children. Based on the programme of training offered to teachers, leaders had developed and started to introduce a curriculum aimed at helping children to address their barriers to learning as well as develop their knowledge and skills.

Teachers had enabled children to continue to make progress during the pandemic. They ensured that children achieved qualifications in the summer in English, mathematics and psychology GCSE and several other vocational areas.

Leaders and managers ensured that teachers planned effective support for children to make good progress with their learning. However, in a small number of cases results of initial assessments were not made available to teachers in a timely manner. Consequently, teachers could not use the results of initial assessments to plan individual learning effectively.

Staff reported that they had faced teaching challenges due to the insufficient information technology (IT) resources available. This limited their ability to offer a greater range of learning activities and subjects to children. Teachers had begun to take photographs of children's work to evidence their learning as required by their qualifications' criteria. However, teachers were not able to make use of the telephony system to support and assess children's speaking and listening skills on English courses when children were isolating.

Teachers' feedback on children's written work was not specific enough to inform children of what they needed to do to improve their skills and knowledge. Feedback was too vague in describing what children had done well. Teachers did not consistently identify children's spelling and grammatical errors or support them to correct these.

Next steps

Leaders and managers should continue to increase the hours of education, skills and work that children receive as soon as possible, ensuring that the benefits experienced as a result of small group sizes are sustained.

Leaders and managers should seek to improve the provision of IT so that teachers can support children to further develop their vocational knowledge and English skills.

Teachers should provide more specific and helpful feedback on children's written and other assessed work to enable them to improve their knowledge and skills.

Leaders and managers should recruit staff to the existing LSA vacancies to ensure that sufficient support is available to all children when the establishment returns to full occupancy.

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