

Ofsted report on education, skills and work activities

HMP Wayland

Dates of inspection: 26 January – 5 February 2026

This part of the inspection was carried out by Ofsted inspectors using Ofsted's [Handbook for the inspection of education, skills and work activities in prisons and young offender institutions](#).

Ofsted inspects skills and work in custodial establishments as part of its further education and skills inspection activity. These inspections cover four areas: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management. The findings are presented in the order of the learner journey in the establishment. Together with the areas of concern, this is Ofsted's assessment of what the establishment does well and what it needs to do better.

Education, skills and work activities

Expected outcomes:

All prisoners are expected and enabled to engage in education, skills or work activities that promote personal development and employability. There are sufficient, suitable education, skills and work places to meet the needs of the population and provision is of a good standard.

Ofsted made the following assessments about the education, skills and work provision:

Overall effectiveness: Good

Quality of education: Good

Behaviour and attitudes: Good

Personal development: Requires Improvement

Leadership and management: Good

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

Leaders had successfully addressed most recommendations from the previous inspection. They had made significant improvements across education, skills, and work (ESW). Increased staffing capacity led to a substantial improvement in the availability of ESW activities. Leaders had introduced useful accredited qualifications in workshops. They ensured that progress-in-work booklets were used effectively to develop, recognise, and monitor vocational skills. Leaders implemented robust quality monitoring systems and improvement processes. These actions raised standards across ESW. Attendance had improved notably.

Leaders and managers ensured there were enough activity spaces for prisoners. Very few prisoners were without work. Waiting lists were short and well managed. Leaders used induction information to match prisoners to the right pathways. Prisoners were swiftly allocated to activities that suited their skills, sentence length, and future goals. Pay for prisoners in ESW activities was equitable. It encouraged attendance and progression into higher-risk or skilled roles and the achievement of qualifications. Prisoners in roles with greater responsibility, such as biohazard cleaners and industry supervisors, received higher pay.

Leaders and managers had a clear strategy for the ESW curriculum that focused on employability and progression. They worked closely with national employers, used job market information, and listened to prisoner feedback carefully. They had designed a broad and relevant curriculum that met the needs of prisoners and matched local and national job opportunities.

Leaders had adapted the curriculum to meet recent changes in the prison population. They had designed clear progression pathways based on prisoners' length of stay. For most prisoners, who had short stays at the prison, leaders prioritised English and mathematics qualifications and important employability skills such as teamwork, independence and timekeeping. Those prisoners who stayed longer had opportunities to complete level 2 leadership qualifications and distance learning courses, and progress on to supervisory roles. Prisoners benefited from a much-improved, purposeful curriculum in industries and work. This included cleaning, waste management, warehousing, forklift training, and construction-based multi-skills, with the chance to gain a construction skills certification card. The curriculum helped prisoners develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed for future training and resettlement.

Leaders ensured the curriculum was ambitious, highly inclusive, and accessible to all prisoners. Outreach and wing-based teaching supported participation for those who struggled to attend education blocks. This effectively reduced barriers to learning. Prisoners studying functional skills qualifications were well supported to progress to level 1 and 2 qualifications. Leaders had also developed specialist provision for prisoners with complex neurodiverse needs, providing a structured pathway into mainstream industry workshops. Managers provided a timely induction programme to help prisoners adjust to prison life. Prisoners completed useful activities to establish their starting points. However, staff at induction did not give prisoners enough information about industries or other work opportunities. Too often, prisoners developed their initial personal action plans without a clear understanding of the learning opportunities available across ESW.

Careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) was not sufficiently effective due to staffing shortages and contractual constraints. High prisoner turnover increased demand for induction and pre-release support. This placed considerable pressure on the CIAG advisors, who could not complete all required work. Prisoners did not have their career plans reviewed or updated frequently enough.

Leaders and managers had an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the ESW provision. Leaders had robust quality assurance arrangements and accurately identified strengths and weaknesses. They held the prison education service (PES) provider to account through monthly performance meetings, fortnightly quality improvement plan reviews and daily briefings.

Most teaching and training was effective. Teachers, vocational trainers and instructors were suitably qualified, received regular professional development and demonstrated strong subject knowledge. Teachers planned learning that was well sequenced and built on prisoners' prior knowledge.

Leaders and managers ensured that most work activities developed prisoners' vocational skills. In cleaning, prisoners achieved accredited level 2 qualifications and bio-hazard certification. In waste management, they learned technical skills such as sorting, recycling, and operating compression machinery.

Most industry workshops offered high-intensity work environments where prisoners developed a wide range of transferable skills. Prisoners in textiles, waste management, carpentry, warehousing, and logistics produced work to commercial standards, and wing

workers developed valuable employability skills such as teamwork, communication, and initiative. The DHL workshop provided a realistic commercial environment involving stock control, spreadsheets, and order processing.

Most prisoners with neurodiverse needs were well supported. Managers screened prisoners effectively and implemented appropriate support plans. Teachers, trainers, and instructors received appropriate training. They had a thorough understanding of neurodiverse needs. Instructors and vocational trainers used effective strategies to support prisoners. However, in a small number of cases teachers did not consistently apply support strategies for those with learning needs.

People Plus, the PES provider, ensured that most prisoners benefited from a well-planned and well-taught education and vocational curriculum. Teachers and trainers were experienced, appropriately qualified, and highly knowledgeable in their subjects. They used their expertise to provide clear explanations and demonstrations.

Teachers carefully sequenced the curriculum to build on prisoners' prior knowledge and skills. In functional skills English, teachers focused first on reading. This helped prisoners develop spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, building their confidence and preparing them for writing. In multi-skills carpentry, prisoners learned to work safely, identify wood and tools, check quality, mark out, cut materials, measure angles, apply finishes, and carry out quality checks.

Most prisoners received frequent, constructive feedback and had opportunities to practise and refine their work. They developed their skills and knowledge quickly and worked independently on challenging classwork and homework tasks. However, in a small number of cases, teachers did not ensure that prisoners acted on feedback to correct and improve their work. In functional skills English, prisoners sometimes repeated the same mistakes in subsequent tasks.

Achievement rates in mathematics and English had improved considerably, with a high proportion of prisoners passing their examinations at the first attempt. Most prisoners studying vocational subjects achieved their qualifications.

Leaders and managers had implemented an effective whole prison reading strategy. This was underpinned by a comprehensive reading development plan and tiered intervention processes, which included highly effective partnerships with the Shannon Trust, trained peer mentors and dedicated reading specialists. Teaching staff had received training in phonics and specialist training in 'That Reading Thing'. They used this training to provide valuable, targeted support to prisoners with low-level reading skills.

Teachers, trainers and instructors ensured reading was prioritised across all ESW activities. Prisoners benefitted from frequent library access. Staff promoted well reading for employment, wellbeing and personal development. Prisoners developed greater confidence and positive reading habits.

Prisoners had frequent access to digital resources, with laptops available in all cells. They made effective use of the Virtual Campus (VC) during induction and for assessments, and those nearing release used it to search for jobs, write CVs, and complete personal

statements. Prisoners completing distance learning used the VC to develop independent research skills and appropriate digital skills to support their next steps.

Prisoners benefited from calm, structured, and purposeful environments. Leaders, managers and staff set high expectations for behaviour, which prisoners responded to positively. They treated others with respect and courtesy. Attendance to ESW was generally high, and prisoners arrived punctually. In a small number of English and mathematics lessons, attendance fell below leaders' expectations and was too low. Leaders monitored attendance rigorously, holding managers to account via daily briefings.

Most prisoners had a secure understanding of life in modern Britain. They and were able to clearly explain how fundamental British values related to their lives in prison and in the wider community.

Leaders were innovative in providing additional learning opportunities for prisoners, including securing funding through Creating Future Opportunities to commission an entry level tattooing workshop. This enabled prisoners to develop practical skills and offered a route into employment.

Further enrichment activities included peer-led art sessions, therapeutic games for prisoners who were retired or otherwise unable to work, and music and drama activities. Leaders also delivered a short workshop focused on developing intuitive thinking skills. However, opportunities for enrichment beyond ESW were limited, and too few prisoners benefited from these valuable activities.

Leaders and managers worked effectively with charities and local employers to prepare prisoners for their next steps. Prisoners benefited from workshops that built confidence and skills in disclosing convictions, focusing on when, why, and how to do so appropriately. A wide range of employers supported prisoners through CV writing sessions, interview skills training, and workshops that explored workplace expectations and roles across different industries. Prisoners also received effective, individualised pre-release support, planned 12 weeks before release, to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place to support their successful transition back into the community.

Priority concerns and key concerns

Key concern

Too many prisoners did not receive ongoing careers information, advice, and guidance (CIAG), and their career plans were not reviewed or updated frequently enough.

Key concern

Leaders did not ensure enough prisoners had access to a broad, high-quality enrichment curriculum.