

# HMP Grendon

Prison education interim visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Ken Merry, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Visit date(s):** 9-10 March 2021

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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 had a strong vision for education, skills and work that they hoped to realise once national Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. While the prison remained primarily a therapeutic community, leaders recognised that there was a need for the education, skills and work curriculum to be reviewed to ensure that it closely supported the therapy programmes offered at the prison.

Leaders planned to consult with prisoners about the education, skills and work offer in the near future, including the creation of a farm shop at the adjacent open prison. Leaders planned that prisoners at HMP Grendon would make items to sell, such as wall art for people's homes. However, as leaders had not yet started the consultation, they were unable to explain how they would ensure the education, skills and work offer would meet the needs of prisoners.

Managers had carefully planned for a return to classroom-based teaching. They had considered social distancing requirements within classrooms. They had also started planning a blended learning approach to enable prisoners to combine in-cell learning with face-to-face teaching. However, it was too soon to see these plans being implemented due to the on-going national Covid-19 restrictions.

Leaders recognised that the range of education options for prisoners ordinarily provided by third party organisations had been substantially limited during the pandemic. This meant prisoners were unable to take part in activities that they had previously found enjoyable and beneficial. Leaders planned to restart these activities as soon as possible.

Introduced in September, paper-based education activity packs had been slowly adopted by prisoners. Managers had closely tracked whether prisoners had understood the content of the work packs. They had ensured the content of the packs was mapped against the awarding body assessment criteria, but prisoners completed them as non-accredited learning and no prisoners were working toward a

qualification. Despite the best efforts of managers, the proportion of prisoners who had completed and returned education work packs was low.

Leaders had identified that learners with additional learning needs were potentially the most affected by restrictions. However, they had not yet provided any additional learning support at the time of the visit.

Generally, prisoners had a positive view of education. Most were enthusiastic about the courses that they were studying and believed that they would benefit from this learning in their future. They accept the reason why education was being delivered in their cells via workbooks rather than face-to-face in classrooms.

**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?**

Prisoners engaged in learning through in-cell packs that were tailored to their individual needs and abilities. They provided feedback to teaching staff on the usefulness of the packs and teachers made adjustments as necessary. The range of courses available through in-cell packs was limited, focusing primarily on functional skills and business studies.

Managers implemented several projects to support prisoners' mental wellbeing. These helped prisoners to maintain positive relationships with each other and allowed them to express their feelings. Through these activities, prisoners used their teamwork and literacy skills.

Managers monitored the quality of education and skills and took a great interest in the in-cell work that prisoners completed. They identified concerns in teachers' practice and supported them to improve. Teachers felt well supported in delivering the new in-cell curriculum and appreciated the collaborative approach from leaders. Managers and teachers said that they clearly understood what prisoners knew and could do as a result of the in-cell packs that they had completed.

Managers had implemented a range of training activities that helped education staff adapt to teaching remotely. However, instructors had not received any specific training that maintained their vocational skills. As a result, they were not yet ready for the re-introduction of employment activities.

Teachers stated that creating in-cell packs had helped them to explain concepts more clearly. However, teachers recognised that the lack of face-to-face contact had created a barrier for a few prisoners that prevented them from engaging in education. Prisoners did not receive the necessary support towards learning, including constructive feedback on their work.

At the time of the visit, prisoners did not have access to information, advice and guidance services. Managers had recently engaged a new careers advice provider. However, they were not yet meeting prisoners.

### **Next steps**

Prison leaders and the education provider must devise a plan that increases the contact between prisoners and tutors to ensure prisoners receive adequate support, including additional learning support, to make at least the expected progress in their education.

Prison leaders and the education provider should ensure that all prisoners are given the opportunity to study towards accredited qualifications as soon as possible.

Prison leaders should ensure that prisoners have access to high-quality information, advice and guidance that helps them to achieve their career ambitions.

Managers should ensure that they review the needs of prisoners in relation to education, skills and work so that they can ensure the new delivery plan for 2021/22 is fit for purpose and meets prisoners' need.

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