



19 September 2011

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**NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00.01, TUESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2011**

### **HMP BEDFORD – COMMENDABLE PROGRESS**

HMP Bedford provided a generally safe and decent environment, but could develop further, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the Bedfordshire local jail.

Bedford is a small, Victorian prison which, like all local prisons, has to manage a transient population of often needy prisoners in a limited and crowded environment. Despite these challenges, Bedford's last inspection was positive, while this inspection found further progress had been made, although still not enough was being done to resettle the many short-term prisoners.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- the prison was generally safe, work on preventing self-harm had improved and violence reduction work was sound;
- the prison had made considerable efforts to ensure the sometimes dilapidated environment was kept in a decent state of repair;
- staff-prisoner relationships remained good;
- a little more accredited vocational training was available and some aspects of education had improved; and
- offender management and public protection arrangements were sound.

However, inspectors had some concerns:

- there was still scope to improve aspects of the management of early days in custody;
- there was a need to develop further the prison's approach to diversity, particularly with the disabled; and
- there had been insufficient progress on work to assess and respond to the resettlement needs of short-term and remand prisoners, the majority of the population.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Bedford faces all the typical challenges of a crowded and largely Victorian local prison, including limited accommodation, a rapid turnover of prisoners and a vast array of risks and needs to manage. To the prison's credit, it continues to rise to most of these challenges, providing a generally safe and respectful environment but with scope to develop further, particularly in the resettlement of short-term prisoners.”

Michael Spurr, Chief Executive Officer of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), said:

"I am pleased the Chief Inspector found Bedford was building on its previous positive report with improved work on preventing self-harm, more vocational training and good staff-prisoner relationships.

"The Governor and staff will now work to address the concerns raised over the management of early days in custody, diversity and resettlement provision to consolidate the prison as a safe and purposeful establishment.

"All these actions, as well the improvements in training highlighted here, will reduce the likelihood of reoffending and thereby protect the public."

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 20 September 2011 at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi-inspections/index.htm>
2. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent inspectorate, inspecting places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.
3. This unannounced short follow-up inspection was carried out from 2-5 May 2011.
4. HMP Bedford is a category B local male prison and young offender institution which serves the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire courts.
5. Please contact Jane Parsons in HMI Prisons Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 from 0915 to 1415 Monday to Friday if you would like more information or to request an interview with Nick Hardwick.