



11 July 2011

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00.01, WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY 2011

HMP BLUNDESTON – DISAPPOINTING

HMP Blundeston had drifted backwards in many areas and needed a new sense of direction, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced inspection of the Suffolk jail.

Blundeston is a small category C training prison which was commended at its last inspection. However, it can be unpopular with many prisoners from outside East Anglia who struggle to maintain family ties. Recently staff have become fearful of the prison's future at a time when some small prisons are being earmarked for closure. This inspection found a prison that had drifted backwards in a number of important areas, notably safety, respect and resettlement.

Inspectors were concerned to find that:

- significant numbers of prisoners reported feeling unsafe and too many sought sanctuary in the segregation unit;
- early days in custody required improvement and there was scope to improve violence reduction and anti-bullying work;
- the sanitation arrangements in some of the older wings were not acceptable;

- although use of force was low, there had been an increase in the use of special accommodation, which needed better governance to ensure its use was justified;
- staff-prisoner relations varied, diversity arrangements were underdeveloped and services for foreign national prisoners were poor; and
- the strategic management of resettlement was weak and the offender management unit was underdeveloped, while the number of available interventions had fallen.

Nick Hardwick said:

"This is a disappointing report on a prison which appears to have gone backwards recently. However, it is also a prison with a number of assets, particularly its very good training provision, and we were pleased to hear of exciting regional plans to make Blundeston a centre for East Anglian prisoners which might ease a number of its current problems."

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

"This report identifies a number of weaknesses at Blundeston.

"Since the Inspection, the Governor and his staff have worked hard to address the issues and action is in place to meet the recommendations.

"These include a more strategic approach to rehabilitation, the introduction of staff profiles that deliver a constructive and predictable regime for offenders and a reduction in violence."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 13 July 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 announced inspection was carried out from 31 January – 4 February 2011.
4. HMP Blundeston is a category C training prison for adult males.
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.