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HMP ASKHAM GRANGE – AN IMPRESSIVE RESETTLEMENT PRISON

HMP Askham Grange continues to be an impressive resettlement prison, but could make further progress, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the women's jail in Yorkshire.

Askham Grange was previously described by inspectors in 2008 as outstanding, with good outcomes for its women prisoners in every area. This follow-up inspection focused on the relatively minor areas where room for improvement was identified.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- women felt very safe and did not raise any significant concerns;
- staff-prisoner relationships were good;
- child care professionals were now involved in running the mother and baby unit;
- there was good work done with women who had problems with drugs;
- the prison provided a good range and quality of education, training and work; and
- there was good support for women with alcohol problems.

However, inspectors had some concerns:

- more work needs to be done to improve day to day communication and planning between health care and other departments;
- more could be done to improve the mother and baby unit and create a more child-friendly environment, such as more child care training for discipline officers, and discipline officers not wearing uniforms; and
- the reducing reoffending strategy would benefit from addressing the needs of short-sentenced women more clearly.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Askham Grange continues to be an impressive prison and for the most part it had improved or maintained the high standards we found at our last inspection. However, the prison should not rest on its laurels. There is still room for improvement and in some areas we were disappointed that more progress had not been made. Nevertheless, the improvements that are required start from a very high base and this should not detract from what are, once again, very positive inspection findings.”

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

"The Chief Inspector recognises that Askham Grange continues to perform well and maintain high standards of safety, staff-prisoner relationships, education and training.

“The Governor and her staff will continue to work hard to maintain the high level of performance so that Askham Grange can continue with its role or resettling women into the community, thereby reducing re-offending and protecting the public.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 30 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 30 May-2 June 2011.
4. HMP Askham Grange is an open establishment operating a resettlement regime for women and young adult women. It also accommodates up to 10 mothers and babies.
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.