

HEWELL GRANGE - NEEDS GREATER FOCUS ON RESETTLEMENT

Relationships between staff and prisoners were relaxed and respectful but more effective resettlement work is needed at Hewell Grange, said HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Anne Owers, publishing the prison inspection report today.

The report follows an unannounced inspection of HMP Hewell Grange, an open prison for low-risk prisoners, in Worcestershire, carried out in October 2001.

Since the last inspection in 1997, the Inspectorate found that the establishment had made significant progress and that there was a commitment to making Hewell Grange a positive experience for prisoners.

The report praises the short non-accredited courses designed to address aspects of offending behaviour and applauds the active encouragement given by the Governor to helping prisoners learn to drive before discharge.

However, the report identifies areas of effective resettlement work with prisoners which needed to be improved at Hewell Grange:

- Managers and staff should be clearer about the specific resettlement needs of individual prisoners;
 - Work training should provide far more opportunities for the type of qualification that will assist prisoners to gain employment on release;
- Whilst the quality of basic skills teaching in literacy and numeracy was very good indeed, more resources should be provided to widen the scope of subjects being offered, particularly for those with potential for more advanced education.

Concluding Anne Owers said:

“There is more that HMP Hewell Grange could offer if it was clearer about the resettlement needs of its individual prisoners. This would give it a strong basis to bid for additional resources to meet those needs. The prison also needed an effective personal officer scheme to help ensure that prisoners worked through their sentence plans, and a co-ordinated approach to resettlement and preparation for release.

“I have made similar comments in the recently published inspection reports on Leyhill open prison and Latchmere House resettlement prison. This suggests that there are strategic management issues for the Prison Service, to clarify the expectations and use of these kinds of prison in order to maximise their resettlement potential.”

Commenting on the report, Martin Narey, Director General of the Prison Service said:

“The Chief Inspector has recognised the positive and respectful atmosphere at HMP Hewell Grange, and the provision of excellent basic skills training. I fear however she may be underestimating the challenge facing open prisons with the current very high population and the number of short term prisoners we have to send there.

“Despite this and although not resourced as a resettlement prison, over a third of the prison’s population is employed in the community. It is also successfully developing local schemes to improve employment prospects for offenders. These include the establishment of a "job point" giving prisoners electronic access to the job centre in their home town.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The announced inspection of HMP Hewell Grange was carried out from 22 to 26 October 2001.
2. HMP Hewell Grange is a category D open prison for adult males.
3. Prison Inspectorate reports and press releases are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmipris/hmipris.htm>