

Following the change to a category C training prison, some of the good work at HMP Maidstone had slipped back, said Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing an unannounced follow-up inspection report into the prison.

Though the report commended staff-prisoner relationships and improvement in healthcare, it identified some major areas of concern:

- First night, induction, suicide prevention and anti-bullying all needed strengthening to improve prisoners' safety;
- Since the last inspection the prison had become considerably grubbier;
- Too little was being done to support foreign nationals;
- Most education facilities had improved, but there were still insufficient opportunities for vocational qualifications;
- Resettlement and sentence planning, once excellent, had considerably deteriorated.

Anne Owers said:

"It is disappointing that the transition to Category C status has not involved smooth and linear progress since we last inspected, indeed some areas have slipped back. However, managers are aware of this and, to their credit, have sound plans in place to address these failings, so that the prison can embrace its new role and deliver its training function effectively."

Peter Atherton, Deputy Director General of the Prison Service, said:

"Since Maidstone changed its role, much work has gone into providing an appropriate regime for lower category prisoners. A number of training opportunities are now open to prisoners, all of which lead to nationally recognised qualifications, and the prison is working towards achieving full employment. Considerable efforts have been made to improve the cleanliness of the prison and a painting programme is underway."

Notes to editors:

1. The unannounced inspection of HMP Maidstone took place on 2-4 November 2004.
2. Maidstone is a category C training prison.
3. Inspectorate reports and releases are available at

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/prisons/inspprisons>.

4. For an electronic copy of the report, please call 020 7035 3852.

1.