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**HMP SPRING HILL – ADJUSTING TO CHALLENGES**

HMP Spring Hill had adjusted well to the challenges of population pressure, said Dame Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an announced full inspection of the open prison in Buckinghamshire.

The prison was nearly full, with more short-term prisoners, rather than the long-term population it had previously focused on. However, inspectors found that Spring Hill had risen to this task and was a very safe place, with a purposeful regime and a proper focus on resettlement.

Inspectors found:

- Prisoners reported feeling safe at Spring Hill, and there was little bullying and few instances of self-harm, although procedures needed to be enhanced.
- Security had improved and staff responded well to the challenge of managing the increased number and variety of prisoners. As a result, drug use was relatively low and absconding had been reduced.
- Some of the accommodation huts at Spring Hill were reaching the end of their useful lives and levels of cleanliness were variable.
- Staff–prisoner relationships were generally good, despite an underdeveloped personal officer scheme. General diversity work was also underdeveloped, but race equality work was well managed.
- There were good educational and work opportunities, particularly for longer-term prisoners. There was a wide range of vocational courses but more support was needed for the large number of prisoners with dyslexia.
- Resettlement provision was generally good, as were offender management and public protection, but the needs of short-term prisoners were not met.

**Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, said:**

“As a result of the population pressures, open prisons such as Spring Hill are operating at near capacity and have to manage significant numbers of short-term prisoners.

“Commendably, Spring Hill had adjusted well to these challenges: drug use was noticeably low and the number of absconds had reduced. Prisoners felt safe, there was a good range of purposeful activity and resettlement provision was reasonable.

“Still more needed to be done to support those spending only short periods at the prison and some accommodation had reached the end of its useful life, but, overall, Spring Hill was an effective open prison.”

**Phil Wheatley, Director General of the National Offender Management Service, said:**

“This is an excellent report which rightly recognises the strong work of management and staff at Spring Hill in creating a safe and positive environment for prisoners.

“As the report makes clear Spring Hill is holding prisoners in greater numbers and with more varied needs and to have risen to that challenge so well is impressive.”

#### **Notes for Editors**

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 3 March 2009 at <http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmiprison>
2. The announced full inspection of HMP Spring Hill was carried out from 11–14 August 2008. The last full inspection of HMP Spring Hill took place in July 2006.
3. The operational capacity at HMP Spring Hill is 333.
4. The establishment is the oldest of the open prisons and was opened in 1953. It forms part of a two-establishment cluster with HMP Grendon therapeutic prison.
5. Nigel Newcomen, Deputy Chief Inspector of Prisons, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to him please contact Andrew Winstone in the Press Office on 0203 334 3530.