



14 November 2011

020 7035 2123

NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00.01, TUESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2011

HMP SWALESIDE – MAKING REASONABLE PROGRESS

HMP Swaleside has many strengths, but despite being a designated ‘training’ prison does not provide sufficient training opportunities for its prisoners, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the Isle of Sheppey training jail.

Swaleside holds prisoners up to category B status, many of whom are subject to long or indeterminate sentences for serious offences. At its last inspection in 2008, Swaleside was described as a successful establishment which was safe – a significant achievement considering the risks and challenges of its population. Inspectors were concerned about the provision of activity and access to the prison regime, and these concerns remain.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- Swaleside seemed a fundamentally safe prison, and work to address safer custody issues was well developed;
- staff-prisoner relationships were strong, with good personal officer work;
- prisoners with a disability were well supported;
- health care was provided in a refurbished facility and much had been done to improve access; and

- an enthusiastic management team was implementing meaningful and deliverable plans to sustain effective offender management and improve resettlement services.

However, inspectors had some concerns:

- there had been some improvements in the provision of learning and skills but much lacked coordination and there was only sufficient activity to meet the needs of about 80% of the population;
- during the working day, inspectors found a quarter of the population locked in cell, though this was an improvement from the previous visit;
- despite the prison being essentially safe, the number of reported incidents of violence was significant; and
- governance of special accommodation, segregation and use of force needed to improve.

Nick Hardwick said:

"This is a positive report. Swaleside has been a safe establishment characterised by good relationships between staff and prisoners, although the training element provided has not been good enough. This inspection suggests that the prison continues to build on its strengths but it still needs to get a strategic grip on the provision of purposeful activity and training."

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

"I am pleased that the Chief Inspector recognises that, despite the recent expansion, Swaleside is fundamentally safe with strong staff/prisoner relationships and a respectful environment. The Governor and his staff will continue to work to improve the training and resettlement facilities. All these factors will help to reduce the likelihood of re-offending and thereby protect the public."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 15 November 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 4-7 July 2011.
4. HMP Swaleside is a category B adult male training prison and is part of the Sheppey cluster, also comprising HMP Elmley and HMP Stanford Hill.
5. Please contact Jane Parsons in HMI Prisons Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 from 0900 to 1415 Monday to Friday if you would like more information or to request an interview with Nick Hardwick.