

Written evidence submitted by Mr Tony Linnett (Volunteer at Independent Monitoring Board for HMP Isis)

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The views below are based on visits to the prison during which teaching was observed, data analysis undertaken, and prisoners and staff were spoken to.

- ❖ Isis has excellent facilities in the academy and skill zone. Classrooms and workshops are spacious and well equipped.
 - ❖ There are systems in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching which was judged as requiring improvement in the last inspection. However, meaningful progress has been limited due to the suspension of all face-to-face teaching in March 2020.
 - ❖ The curriculum is appropriate for a training prison with a focus on developing basic English and Maths skills as well as providing vocational training that leads to formal qualifications and enhances the employability of prisoners on release.
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- There has been no face-to face teaching (other than informal 1-1 catch ups instigated from November 2020 onwards) since the end of March 2020. This is hard to justify at Isis, or any other prison, given that limited year groups returned to schools in June and all year groups were back by September.
 - The use of prior attainment data appears weak. There seems to be too much reliance on what prisoners tell staff and on assessments made during induction. For many of the younger prisoners it would be a straightforward task to access Key Stage 1&2 outcomes as well as any qualifications gained at GCSE level or above.
 - Attainment measures tend to focus on agreed local and national targets for the percentage of prisoners who will achieve formal qualifications in, for example, Levels 1 & 2 English and Maths. Progress measures are less clear, which is linked to the issue of prior attainment information.
 - The prison does not appear to have good systems to identify prisoners who may have an open Education, Health and Care Plan which, legally, should be regularly reviewed until the supported individual reaches the age of 25.
 - Although it is a worthy aim to help prisoners to achieve qualifications at Levels 1 & 2 in English and Maths as the higher level is deemed the standard required for industry, it is an unrealistic expectation and very few prisoners attained this standard in 2019.
 - Teaching in core subjects would, perhaps, be more useful to the prisoners if it were more practical and linked, wherever possible, to vocational training such as barbering, painting and decorating etc.
 - Because some prisoners attend English and Maths lessons on sufferance, seeing attendance as a means to an end – avoiding loss of privileges, earning pay, being able to progress to other more interesting vocational courses – participation and engagement has been observed as poor on many occasions.
 - Given that many of the young prisoners at Isis have been unsuccessful at school, the prison needs to consider developing a curriculum for English and Maths that is practical and

engaging, and not perceived as 'more of the same' by students who may have developed negative, entrenched attitudes towards formal schooling.

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