



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Robin Seaton
Executive Director
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HM Prison and Probation Service

Charlie Taylor,
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

23rd February 2026

Dear Charlie,

HMIP report on an Independent Review of Progress at HMP Thameside 12-14 January 2026

Thank you for your Independent Review of Progress report at HMP Thameside, which followed up on seven priority/key concerns and two Ofsted themes.

I am encouraged to note that you have seen good and reasonable progress being made across four of the concerns and reasonable progress in two of the Ofsted themes, and note the following:

- Healthcare leadership and governance have strengthened significantly. The removal of the regulatory warning notice reflects a sustained improvement in clinical oversight, patient safety arrangements and complaints management. New leadership has brought greater stability, clearer accountability and improved staff confidence, resulting in more consistent care delivery and shorter waiting times for primary care services.
- There has been meaningful improvement in care for prisoners in crisis. Recorded self-harm has reduced, ACCT processes are monitored closely, and care plans are more focused on individual need. Prisoners subject to an ACCT told inspectors that they felt supported by staff, and the enhanced regime has improved daily experiences. While further work remains, the foundations for safer and more responsive care are now in place.
- Education, skills and work provision has progressed. Allocation processes are more effective, resulting in a higher proportion of prisoners engaged in activities. Teaching quality is improving, with calmer learning environments, clearer expectations and more purposeful lesson planning. These developments provide a stronger platform for improving attendance and achievement going forward. However, we acknowledge that further work is required.

In respect of the three concerns where you found insufficient progress, I can confirm that all the IRP findings have been carefully considered, and steps are being taken to address them appropriately. This will include the following:

- While violence against staff has reduced and adjudication backlogs have been addressed, serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults remain too high. Further assurance work is required to ensure that behaviour management strategies are consistently applied, low-level poor behaviour is routinely challenged, and incentive frameworks are broadened to reinforce positive conduct. This amounts to a significant culture change. We will ensure that Serco translate this into action to deliver sustained improvement.
- Drug misuse and security arrangements continue to present risks. Despite improvements in searching and intelligence management, positive drug test rates remain high. We will engage with Serco to seek assurance that additional measures, including enhanced suspicion testing and staff searching are implemented. We will review gate security arrangements, but this will be dependent upon identifying the necessary resources.
- Mental health transfers to hospital remain a significant concern. Although leadership focus has improved and individual cases are being progressed more assertively, too many prisoners continue to wait beyond recommended timescales. There are system-wide challenges that are not within the control of the prison, but there will be a continued focus to work in partnership with external agencies, so prisoners receive timely care and are not held in custody inappropriately.

The Director, with the support of the Senior Contract Manager will continue to progress the full action plan from your inspection covering all the original priority/key concerns as well as the further feedback in this review of progress. I will also continue to closely monitor progress and support further improvement.

While I acknowledge that there is still much work to be done out at the prison, I am encouraged that progress is being made and that our monitoring of the prison is in line with your findings.

Yours sincerely,

Robin Seaton
Executive Director, Directorate of Contracted Operational Delivery