# Mobile prison at West Yorkshire school offers stark lesson on crime consequences



Students at Crigglestone St. James Academy, a primary school in West Yorkshire, recently faced an unexpected twist to their day when a mobile prison arrived on their campus. This van, designed to replicate the inside of a jail, aims to provide a stark, immersive experience designed to educate youngsters about the serious consequences of crime. As they entered the vehicle, the former police officer Mick Amos greeted them, saying, "You are now gonna become prisoners." The students, dressed in inmate attire, were subjected to scanning, photographing, and fingerprinting, procedures intended to simulate the reality faced by actual inmates.

Inside, they encountered cells equipped with items scavenged from real prisons, including stainless-steel toilets, creating a grim atmosphere that brought the harshness of confinement directly to their experience. The reactions from the children were immediate and profound; sixth-grader Ava described the cell as "disgusting," expressing feelings of claustrophobia and anxiety. "It was really sad to see all the cards and pictures on the walls and to think about not being able to see your friends and family," she said, highlighting the emotional toll of being locked away. Such reflections underline the project’s goal: to provoke thought and initiate conversations about the repercussions of crime, encompassing issues such as drugs, alcohol, and violence.

Amos, who has been instrumental in the mobile prison project, asserts that this initiative is not simply a scare tactic but an opportunity for education and awareness. "You can be arrested at 10 years of age, so they deserve to know about their responsibilities," he noted, emphasising the necessity for early intervention in educating young people about crime and accountability. The mobile prison also visits youth clubs and sports organisations, broadening its reach within the community and engaging a diverse array of youngsters.

The concept of immersive educational experiences, particularly in relation to crime prevention, is not unique to this initiative. Several decommissioned prisons across the UK have launched similar programmes aimed at fostering awareness among young people. The "Education Behind Bars" initiative at Shepton Mallet Prison, for example, offers immersive experiences aligned with the national curriculum, engaging students in dialogues about crime and its consequences. Such programmes provide resources that are particularly beneficial in an educational context, ensuring that these experiences contribute substantially to the development of informed young citizens.

Moreover, the UK government's efforts to revamp prison education through initiatives like the Prisoner Education Service aim to tackle the broader issue of reoffending. By equipping offenders with necessary skills for employment post-release, these initiatives are part of a comprehensive strategy to enhance public safety. Evidence indicates that many prisoners have low educational attainment, and efforts to improve this landscape reflect a growing recognition of education as a crucial component in preventing crime.

The experience of students visiting prisons—or in the case of Crigglestone St. James Academy, a simulated version thereof—echoes past initiatives aimed at reinforcing the message of the consequences of criminal behaviour. Similar programmes exist, where students have interacted with inmates to gain first-hand accounts of the realities of crime and incarceration, actively engaging them in discussions that shape their understanding of justice and responsibility.

In England, where the ramifications of crime impact not only individuals but their communities at large, such educational initiatives play a vital role in fostering a culture of awareness and responsibility among the youth. The innovative approach of turning cash seized from criminals into a lesson for the next generation not only repurposes illicit funds but aims to cultivate informed, responsible citizens.

The mobile prison experience at Crigglestone St. James Academy serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of early intervention in crime prevention efforts, guiding students to consider the far-reaching impacts of their choices and the stark realities faced by those who strayed into criminal activity.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.yahoo.com/news/prison-wheels-visits-u-k-175718025.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.yahoo.com/news/prison-wheels-visits-u-k-175718025.html), [[2]](https://www.sheptonmalletprison.com/educational-visits/education-behind-bars/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.yahoo.com/news/prison-wheels-visits-u-k-175718025.html), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-prison-education-service-to-cut-crime)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.sheptonmalletprison.com/educational-visits/education-behind-bars/), [[6]](https://www.shrewsburyprison.com/news/education-behind-bars/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-prison-education-service-to-cut-crime), [[4]](https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/3579227.stm)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.yahoo.com/news/prison-wheels-visits-u-k-175718025.html), [[5]](https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/how-schools-support-pupil-parent-prison)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/prison-wheels-visits-u-k-175718025.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.sheptonmalletprison.com/educational-visits/education-behind-bars/> - Shepton Mallet Prison has launched the 'Education Behind Bars' programme, offering immersive educational experiences for schools, colleges, and universities. Aligned with the national curriculum, the programme provides students with educational packs and materials for teachers, ensuring that school visits are both educational and beyond the traditional classroom setting. The initiative is being delivered nationally across decommissioned prisons, providing students and teachers with access to environments that are not often experienced. The programme is inclusive, catering to various educational establishments and groups, including those with special educational needs.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-prison-education-service-to-cut-crime> - The UK government has introduced a new Prisoner Education Service aimed at transforming learning within prisons to equip offenders with skills for employment upon release, thereby reducing reoffending rates. The service includes specialist teaching staff, apprenticeships, and digital reading tools. Evidence indicates that many prisoners have low educational attainment, with nearly half having been expelled from school and only a third possessing the expected maths and English ability of an 11-year-old. The initiative is part of a broader strategy to better prepare offenders for life after release and enhance public safety.
4. <https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/3579227.stm> - In 2004, a unique educational initiative took place where 46 school pupils from London and the Midlands visited a prison to receive lessons from inmates. The prisoners shared their experiences, particularly focusing on how drug use led to their current situations. The visit included a tour of the prison facilities, providing the students with a stark insight into the consequences of criminal behaviour. This programme aimed to deter young people from engaging in criminal activities by offering them a first-hand perspective on the realities of prison life.
5. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/how-schools-support-pupil-parent-prison> - Approximately one in 15 children experience the imprisonment of a parent during their school years, which can significantly impact their education. Such children may face challenges like disrupted learning due to housing changes, attendance issues, and emotional or behavioural problems stemming from trauma. Schools are encouraged to create supportive environments, destigmatise the issue of parental imprisonment, and empower students to discuss their experiences. Resources like the Prison Advice and Care Trust's (Pact) Schools Toolkit provide teachers with tools to support these pupils effectively.
6. <https://www.shrewsburyprison.com/news/education-behind-bars/> - Shrewsbury Prison has introduced the 'Education Behind Bars' programme, offering immersive educational experiences for schools, colleges, and universities. The programme is aligned with the national curriculum and provides students with educational packs and materials for teachers, ensuring that school visits are both educational and beyond the traditional classroom setting. The initiative is being delivered nationally across decommissioned prisons, providing students and teachers with access to environments that are not often experienced. The programme is inclusive, catering to various educational establishments and groups, including those with special educational needs.
7. <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/get-help/professionals/schools/> - The Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) offers a Schools Toolkit designed to support teachers in assisting students affected by parental imprisonment. With around one in 15 children experiencing the imprisonment of a parent during their school years, the toolkit provides resources to help teachers gain confidence in discussing imprisonment, create spaces for students to talk about their experiences, and ensure that children know that family imprisonment is not a shameful subject. The toolkit includes PSHE lesson plans, an animated short film, books, school policy frameworks, and more.