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Clover Hill Prison Visit

On the 10th of May 5L and 6L went to Clover Hill prison in Co. Dublin. When we got into the prison we were all a little worried as the door closed behind us and then we had to go through airport type security only one person could go through at a time. Some people had to take off their belts and hidden piercings when they walked through the large metal detector to make sure we were not trying to bring anything into the prison. After we went through security we went up to the control room. We got to see all the cameras which monitor all areas of the prison and the keys which open and lock all doors. There were two girls working in the control centre watching all the cameras and we were told that the prison is monitored 24 hours a day 365 days a year! It was also the main control centre for the radios so all the radios were connected to this control centre.

We then got taken into no man's land which is where the prison transport vans are kept. The prison officer told us that it was called no

man's land because you are not on the prison grounds yet but you are also not outside the prison, a place where people who are not fully sentenced pass through so you are not detaining them against their rights. We were shown the inside of a prison van where two prisoners would be transported each with their own area and surprisingly no seatbelt! We then got taken into the prison we went straight into the processing room where we got to see how they get checked into the prison system and also how they check for drugs that may be hidden inside the person. They use an x-ray chair that will make a loud buzzing noise if they have any drugs or mobile phones hidden inside their body and shown on the tv where they are hidden. They then have to change in an all grey tracksuit with a green polo suit.

We then walked down the hall into the prison blocks the first block we went to was block A when all the prisoners were locked up we walked down the block to the recreation area at the end of the hall where there was two pool tables, a card room and a few chairs for them to relax on. We then walked on out to the yard where all they can do in the yard is walk around in circles or play football. We then went on to see the gym where only 25 people can go to it at a time and by the size of the gym you wouldn't even fit 15 people in it and there are over 400 prisoners in the prison. It was explained that because Cloverhill is a Remand prison there is not as much activities for prisoners available.

We walked on to another unit to see inside a cell. The cell was only built for 2 people but 3 people live in one. The cell had a bunk bed and a single bed. There was only one toilet with no privacy and a tv. They get supplies from the tuck shops some people get €9.30 a week other people that work for the prison they get €12.30 a week they can get sweets or cigarettes in the shop or shampoo if they don't want to use the prison ones.

When they were coming near the end of the tour we got to see the visitor area it was a long room and it was a no contact area so the family was on one side of a Plexiglas screen and the prisoner on another they could only see each other and talk through a metal plate at the bottom off the glass that had holes in it. Then we left that room on our way out the prisoner officer told us about why they have a court room on the prisoner grounds and it's so that they don't have to travel far to different courts as so many prisoners leave for court every day. The tour ended at 1:30pm it was an amazing experience to see what life is really like in a prison from first-hand experience!!!

5L and 6L photographed outside Cloverhill Prison

