

13 October 2010

Mrs P Bury
Headteacher
Chaselea Pupil Referral Unit
Avon Road
Cannock
WS11 1LH

Dear Mrs Bury

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 September 2010 to look at your unit's use of alternative provision.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on examining the use of alternative provision for students who are vulnerable to underachieving, and the impact this has on the outcomes for these students.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

Outcomes

- Students at Key Stage 4 attend alternative provision, away from the site of the unit, for the whole of their education. In the past the range of qualifications on offer has been limited. Although it has improved slightly this year, one of the providers still offers very little accreditation for their courses.
- Students with low literacy levels have little opportunity to improve these skills as the majority receive no specialist teaching.
- Of the 19 students in Year 11 who attended alternative provision last year, 11 left with some qualifications. Fifteen went on to education, employment or training.
- The unit's records do not indicate whether students improved their attendance or behaviour during their time at the alternative provision, though case studies show some individual successes in these areas.

- Students spoken with were positive about how their provision helps them to become more mature and to improve their personal and social skills.

Selecting and commissioning

- Senior leaders persevere to commission a wider range of provision which can be tailored more to the students' needs. However, the unit is severely constrained by the lack of any on-site accommodation for Key Stage 4 students. This means that all these students' provision has to be off-site for the whole of the week.
- Some of the Key Stage 4 students do not receive their entitlement to a full-time education.
- As a result of the lack of accommodation, the staff are unable to provide any direct teaching. This limits the curriculum and qualifications which are available to students and the extent to which they can improve their basic skills.
- Senior leaders have a clear vision for the flexible curricula which could be offered if they had a suitable base in which to teach Key Stage 4 students for at least some of each week.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- The unit checks all students' attendance at their placement each time they are meant to attend and follows up any absences swiftly. Attendance is not tracked over time to demonstrate improvement.
- The unit's monitoring of students' progress at Key Stage 3 is very thorough. At Key Stage 4, a very clear record is kept of the qualifications each student is likely to achieve, but students' progress towards these targets is monitored less regularly.
- Although the local authority's District Inclusion Panel has a role in commissioning and monitoring the alternative provision, the quality and content of the information received from providers is variable and the panel does not require them to report in a consistent format. Consequently, students' personal, social and academic progress is not evaluated thoroughly.
- There is a lack of clarity about the registration status of one of the alternative providers which the local authority is currently pursuing.
- Students felt that they had someone they could speak to if they had a problem. All appreciated the support they had received from the unit when they had attended in Key Stage 3 and expressed a wish to be able to spend at least some time at the unit now.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop alternative provision in the unit.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King
Her Majesty's Inspector