

Tribal  
1–4 Portland Square  
BRISTOL  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 0845 123 6001  
Direct F 0117 315 0430  
Direct email: [Fiona.allan1@tribalgroup.com](mailto:Fiona.allan1@tribalgroup.com)

10 November 2010

Mrs D Birks  
Birchwood Pupil Referral Unit  
Brook Education Centre  
Parkfield Road  
Folkestone  
Kent  
CT19 5BY

Dear Mrs Birks

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Birchwood PRU**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 October 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also convey my thanks to your students and the chair of your management committee for the help they provided.

Since the previous inspection, changes have been made to the management structure of the service and there have been locational changes. The service's headquarters have moved from Ashford to Folkestone; one location has ceased to be used, another has been upgraded in quality and a third is now under your direct control.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 June 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the service has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students' progress and learning have improved, so that their overall achievement is better. Nonetheless, their attainment remains low, reflecting the troubled and disrupted education that many have experienced. In lessons observed, learning was at least satisfactory and, in some cases, it was good. Learning is most effective when the students are set interesting and challenging tasks that they can tackle independently, or in small groups. In other lessons observed, although learning was satisfactory, the particular needs of individual students were not catered for in sufficient detail and this restricted them from making good progress.



Satisfactory progress has been made in the use of assessment data to improve attainment. At a whole-service level, assessment procedures are thorough and data are used well to plot each student's progress and to set targets. However, the use of data to inform sharper and more effective lesson planning is less well developed. In lessons staff are not consistently using data to set precise targets for individual students.

Efforts to improve attendance are satisfactory. The trend is upward, though attendance overall remains lower than expected. Many students have significantly improved their attendance rates, but improvement is restricted by the very poor attendance records of a minority. Reducing the levels of absence of some students is a constant focus for leaders. Where attendance is poor it is impeding the progress made by a few students.

Good progress has been made in curriculum improvement. Good efforts are made to ensure that the curriculum meets individual needs. The improvements are reflected in the success that the service has in placing students in further education, training or work at the end of Year 11. All students leave with some form of accreditation and there is an upward trend in GCSE results. The number of students who leave at the end of Year 11 with no clear pathway to follow is falling and is very low. There is good potential for the effectiveness of the curriculum to improve further. The principal site used in Ashford offers much scope especially in terms of enhancing the teaching of sport and environmental and land-based subjects such as horticulture.

Teaching accommodation has improved well. The main site in Ashford is a good one. It is well maintained, is welcoming and offers much potential. Internal changes to a site in Folkestone have led to a more effective use of space. Teaching accommodation here is satisfactory. Science is taught at this location. Though some basic experiments can be undertaken, facilities are limited. The effectiveness of science teaching would benefit by staff and students having access to more specialised facilities. Overall, however, the improvements that have been made offer potential for curriculum innovation and improved learning.

Recent changes in the structure of the leadership team, together with a strengthening of the management committee, have led to more focus on development planning and satisfactory improvements in self-evaluation. The effectiveness of support offered by the local authority and by various partners has also been satisfactory. This is a developing service that has undergone some significant changes, which are now beginning to embed.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham  
**Additional Inspector**



## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009**

- Improve attendance rates of students overall, but particularly at the colleges, and ensure that the curriculum is well planned, challenging and stimulating in all settings.
- Ensure staff make effective use of assessment information to set targets for learning so that they can better match work to each individual and students know what they have to do to improve.
- Improve the role of centre managers in formally assessing the strengths and weakness of their centres in order to contribute more effectively to whole-PRU improvement planning.
- Improve the quality of accommodation to ensure that staff and students have good quality space and facilities.