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8 December 2010

Mrs K Butwilowska
The Headteacher
Stratton Education Centre
St Phillips Road
Upper Stratton
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN2 7QP

Dear Mrs Butwilowska

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stratton Education Centre

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management committee and the Director of Children's Services for Swindon.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Improve all aspects of provision at Youth Education Project to bring about improved outcomes for students that are at least satisfactory by the start of the summer term 2010.
- Improve the curriculum at Stratton by:
 - providing opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 to study science
 - increasing the taught time for primary-aged pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools to the recommended level, and providing them with a broader curriculum.
- Ensure that safeguarding regulations and duties at Secondary Creative Education Project, as highlighted by the inspection team, are fully met by the end of October 2009.
- Urgently implement an effective management information system across the whole of the provision that will enable timely and efficient monitoring and evaluation of all of its work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management of the PRU by:
 - ensuring that centre managers improve their skills at analysing and evaluating the work that goes on in their centres so that they are confident that all students are achieving to the best of their abilities
 - developing robust systems for self-evaluation which involve all staff
 - making good use of the information gathered through self-evaluation to establish a plan that reflects the PRU's vision and ambitions for improvement
 - ensuring the management committee is more effective in challenging and supporting the PRU and meets its statutory requirements.

Special measures: monitoring of Stratton Education Centre

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 November 2010

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, chair of the management committee, the School Improvement Partner, a representative from the secondary behaviour support team and a representative from the local authority. Informal conversations were held with students and other members of staff.

Context

The centre manager at the Swindon Creative Education Project left in July and the provider, which ran the centre, has handed over responsibility to the local authority. The centre has been re-designated as the Youth Education Project (Cheney). The senior leadership team has been reorganised with a change of responsibilities for the two deputies. Provision for children of primary school age has been removed from the unit and it is now the responsibility of a local special school. To strengthen capacity, an associate headteacher works with the unit two days per week and leads on developing the use of assessment information. The Stratton Education Centre, Youth Education Project (Oakfield) and Youth Education Project (Cheney) were inspected. The Riverside Centre, The Hillside Study Centre, Hospital Education Service and the Marlborough Centre were not visited on this occasion.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Scrutiny of current assessment information and observation of lessons show that the majority of students are on track to achieve their targets, although there remains some slight variation in outcomes for students between the different subjects and centres.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Most students behave well and they are continuing to develop better attitudes to learning. The number of exclusions and incidents involving inappropriate behaviour has continued to decline. Attendance continues to improve, but some students find it difficult to arrive on time for the first session of the day. There have been some notable successes in reintegrating students into mainstream schools, particularly those in Key Stage 3.

The effectiveness of provision

All teaching seen was at least satisfactory, with some examples of good and outstanding practice. In the majority of lessons, teachers use a good range of strategies and resources to engage and challenge all learners. Although most

teachers use effective questioning to gauge understanding and develop learning, in a few lessons questions were not personalised sufficiently to focus on the different needs and abilities of individual students. Teachers are well informed about students' needs and prior attainment. Many make good use of this information to plan tasks and activities that meet the needs of their students. However, occasionally lesson planning is not linked to current assessment information and consequently the needs of some students are not met precisely enough to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.

Behaviour issues are managed well and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour. It is not clear that there is a common understanding among staff of the thresholds at which behaviour should be challenged, particularly in relation to the use inappropriate language.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve all aspects of provision at Youth Education Project to bring about improved outcomes for students that are at least satisfactory by the start of the summer term 2010 – good
- improve the curriculum at Stratton by:
 - providing opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 to study science – good progress – good
 - increasing the taught time for primary-aged pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools to the recommended level, and providing them with a broader curriculum – no longer applicable.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders have successfully motivated staff and students so that the various communities that make up the provision share a common sense of purpose. Shared systems and procedures are evident across the different centres. A computer-based management information system is used effectively to record assessment data and to track the progress that students make. Analysis of the data is used to identify any students who need extra support to achieve their targets. An increased willingness at all levels to share knowledge and expertise is helping to improve the quality of teaching and students' learning. Clear priorities for improvement, that are based on a rigorous analysis of accurate performance data, are communicated well. Self-evaluation is accurate and, consequently, centre leaders are developing a clear picture of strengths and areas for development. They have successfully tackled some weaknesses systematically and to good effect, for example the use of subject specialists to develop capacity across the different centres. The recruitment of an associate headteacher and the restructuring of the senior leadership team have improved the capacity at senior leadership level and developed a stronger capacity for further development. A secure single point of entry has been created at the Cheney site and other building work has been completed to make the necessary improvements to toilet facilities.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that safeguarding regulations and duties at Secondary Creative Education Project, as highlighted by the inspection team, are fully met by the end of October 2009 – good
- urgently implement an effective management information system across the whole of the provision that will enable timely and efficient monitoring and evaluation of all of its work – good
- improve the quality of leadership and management of the PRU by:
 - ensuring that centre managers improve their skills at analysing and evaluating the work that goes on in their centres so that they are confident that all students are achieving to the best of their abilities – satisfactory
 - developing robust systems for self-evaluation which involve all staff
 - making good use of the information gathered through self-evaluation to establish a plan that reflects the PRU's vision and ambitions for improvement
 - ensuring the management committee is more effective in challenging and supporting the PRU and meets its statutory requirements – good.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide good support, particularly in relation to supporting improvement to teaching and moderating judgements about the standards that students achieve. The PRU is developing a range of productive partnerships with other agencies, including other local schools, which are making a positive contribution to students' learning and personal development. The management committee is well informed and it is helping to shape the direction of the PRU.