

Serco Inspections
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green Way
Middle Lane
BIRMINGHAM
West Midlands
B47 6LW

OFSTED

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 683 2888
Direct email nikky.regan@serco.com



22 September 2010

Mr Whittingham
Secondary Behaviour Support Service
Carisbrooke Gardens
Knighton
Leicester
LE2 3PR

Dear Mr Whittingham

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of the Secondary Behaviour Support Service

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Tuesday 21 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Thanks to you and the others in the senior leadership team for facilitating my visits to all of the school's four centres and agreeing to participate in dual observations of lessons in each centre. I am most grateful for the welcome and help I received from students and staff in each of the centres.

Since the last s5 inspection the Individual Learning Centre has closed. It had catered for permanently excluded students in Key Stages 3 and 4. Numbers declined rapidly as a result of the introduction of a policy in Leicester of schools not permanently excluding students. As a result, the pupil referral service has reorganised itself as part of a city-wide initiative creating a unified service approach to meeting the needs of students at risk of exclusion. The Individual Learning Centre has been replaced by the De Montfort Specialist Learning Centre which provides short-term preparation of Key Stage 4 students at risk of exclusion for entry to city-wide vocational courses. At the three other specialist learning centres, the school is now focused on short-term, full-time and part-time preventative programmes aimed at maintaining the school places of Key Stage 3 and 4 students at risk of exclusion.

As a result of the inspection on 3 June 2009, the school was asked to improve:

- the attendance of students at the Individual Learning Centre
- target-setting, lesson objectives and the marking of students' work
- the development, review and evaluation of policies promoting equality of opportunity and community cohesion.



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

Students achieve satisfactorily. As it is the start of the school year, most students are new to the school and just settling. In lessons, progress is good because staff have been skilful in establishing a good rapport with students. This is based upon staff being closely attentive to students' needs, being encouraging and giving praise when students meet expectations. Students feel secure and are confident, which leads to their good efforts and positive contributions to learning. They are challenged by their learning and persevere in tackling problems. Behaviour is good and current attendance satisfactory. Attendance at the Individual Learning Centre continued to be low until it closed. A significant proportion of students were persistently absent, exacerbated by some students receiving custodial sentences. Leaders applied several strategies to improving attendance with limited success. Their analysis of data showed that where Key Stage 4 students were placed on vocational courses, attendance improved. The current strategy is to place all Key Stage 4 students involved with the school on a vocational education programme. Attendance should be much less of an issue and show improvement, although at this point in the year there is insufficient data to confirm this.

Gathering useful information on students referred to the school has always been problematic. The new arrangements for working together across the city mean agreements and arrangements for collating and transferring information are improving. A new student placement form enables key facts to be recorded, particularly on attainment, behaviour and any identified special educational needs and/or disability. A new diagnostic assessment procedure has recently been introduced across the school providing initial and on-going measures of attainment and progress. Teachers have just begun to base individual targets on the information from assessment and have a secure means of tracking progress. New targets are more sharply focused on the next steps in learning compared with targets set last year, which were expressed in terms that were too general and not securely related to a student's level of attainment. The school has implemented a marking policy responding to the shortcomings identified in the last s5 inspection. There is evidence now of constructive, developmental commentary by teachers on students' work.

Following review, policies on equality of opportunity and community cohesion have been updated. Equality and the promotion of community cohesion are now the focus of evidence gathering and analysis. Information and communication technology has been installed and helps in overseeing the performance of individuals and groups of students. Development is slow as it is a more complex exercise for this school compared with mainstream schools given the constantly changing and short-term nature of its work with students. The school has collated its evidence on community cohesion and is now able to demonstrate and evaluate the many ways in which community cohesion is promoted in school and beyond.

This fits within a more general drive for improvement which has led to strengthening the systems for monitoring and the evaluation of the school's work, increasing the capacity for sustained improvement. In respect of this, leadership and management functions have been re-examined leading to clarification of responsibilities and a distributive model of leadership roles. These arrangements are now more powerful in relation to accountability and improvement. A good example has been the further regulation of the vocational education providers to ensure they are now made accountable for students' attendance, progress and accreditation. In addition, the collaborative arrangement between the local authority, schools and other organisations, within which the school sits, has sharpened the focus on aims and priorities for improvement.

The local authority has been effective in ensuring the school goes forward with a clear rationale as a re-modelled pupil referral service. The channels of communications with mainstream and special schools and other organisations is clearly helping leaders concentrate on how they can best use their expertise and resources to contribute to the city's strategy.

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

Yours sincerely

Alan Lemon
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Explore and evaluate alternative approaches to improving attendance of students attending the Individual Learning Centre.
- Extend the approach to target setting by identifying what is to be learnt in the short term and ensure marking identifies what the student has to do next to improve their work.
- Implement a programme of development, review and evaluation of key policies promoting equality of opportunity and community cohesion.