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30 September 2013

Mrs Francine Ledsham-Mills
Unit manager
New Summerseat House
Summerseat Lane
Ramsbottom
Bury
BL0 9UD

Dear Mrs Ledsham-Mills

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New Summerseat House

Following my visit to your school on 30 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- moderate assessments of pupils' attainment and progress to ensure accuracy and validity
- develop teachers' skills further in
 - probing and checking pupils' understanding
 - ensuring pupils use relevant subject specific terms in their answers and explanations
 - developing skills in reading
- refine planning for improvement by using collated data and evidence from the monitoring of the quality of provision and pupils' progress to specify challenging targets for teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the manager of Key Stage 4 (New Summerseat House) as well as with the deputy headteacher of the Pupil Learning Centre (all pupil referral units in Bury). Brief visits were made with you to lessons at Park House (Key Stage 3) and at New Summerseat House.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection in January, a teacher has left. Day-to-day management of the Key Stage 3 and 4 sites now rests with senior teachers allowing the unit manager to oversee overall improvement. Of the 20 pupils on roll at the time of this inspection, there were nine Key Stage 3 pupils at Park House, eight Key Stage 4 pupils at New Summerseat House and three Key Stage 3 pupils at the Coney Centre (short stay provision). Consultation begins shortly regarding the restructuring of provision in the local authority for pupils excluded from mainstream schools.

Main findings

The unit is transformed; the two sites visited were calm and pupils were engaging in activities. All were wearing the new uniform. Pupils have accepted the heightened expectations of them, including promptness to lessons, no smoking and the handing in of personal possessions on arrival. The increased emphasis on rewarding desired behaviour is reflected in targets for individual pupils, visible reminders in classrooms and public recognition of who has succeeded. Pupils' views are sought and acted on, such as ideas to furnish and name the proposed 'quiet area' for pupils.

There is a much more purposeful air to New Summerseat House; it is now a definite place of learning. Staff are working well as a team, sharing responsibility for pupils and taking action as needed. Shorter lessons have helped to sharpen the pace of teaching and pupils' concentration as has the decision to give the afternoons to practical activities. As the need reduces for the presence of teaching assistants in sessions, their skills are starting to be used to counsel and support individual pupils in catching-up in their learning.

Support for individual teachers has accompanied professional development sessions led by school staff and external consultants. Staff are planning more carefully in light of pupils' identified needs and they are using marking to indicate how well pupils have met their targets. Classrooms now have displays of key information to support learning. Displays of completed work, such as GCSE artwork from summer 2013, are being used to motivate and celebrate achievement.

There are signs that the quality of teaching is stronger although not consistently good. It is yet to lift pupils' achievement. Outcomes in 2013 showed that Key Stage 4 pupils often fell short of the grades predicted for them. Staff accept that nationally expected progress rates apply and that they are to be held accountable. A good step

forward is the widening of assessments when pupils join the unit to include all subjects, and reading comprehension, to give a more informed overview of starting points. However, not all assessments are spot-on. Now that reading with pupils is a daily event, it is timely to refine staff's skills in developing comprehension and the skills of reading aloud. There is also a need to develop further all staff's skills in probing pupils' understanding and in prompting pupils to say more than just a few words in response to questions.

The unit manager knows that it is now time to 'shift up a gear' and to drive improvement through specific targets for pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in the short and longer term. She has acted on guidance and advice from other headteachers and worked with staff to develop skills, clarify expectations and resolve issues. As a result, morale has risen and staff absence is less of a concern.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has acted with the school to resolve issues regarding the absence of teaching and support staff. In the summer term, it funded the use of a minibus to ease transport problems for pupils. Regular meetings between the unit manager and the deputy headteacher of the Pupil Learning Centre have been highly beneficial in reviewing progress and discussing ways to ensure parity of practice on all sites. The elected member on the Management Committee has played a key role as critical friend in evaluating progress made.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bury and as below.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies