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Mrs S Stainton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stainton

Implementation of Ethos Primary Pupil Referral Unit's Action Plan

Following the visit of Sara Morrissey HMI and Garry Jones HMI, to your unit on 27 and 28 April 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the unit became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the unit; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The unit has made limited progress since the last monitoring inspection and limited progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, and the Director of Lifelong Learning for Kirklees. The letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHOS PRIMARY PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the second monitoring inspection since the unit became subject to special measures

During the visit 11 lessons or parts of lessons, and one registration session were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher and the associate headteacher, senior members of staff, the pupil referral service manager, the educational behavioural difficulties manager, the head of inclusion for the LEA, and the senior educational psychologist. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the associate headteacher, four representatives from the LEA and the educational psychologist.

Since the previous visit, there has been some turbulence resulting from the long term absence of three key members of staff, including the deputy headteacher. This has had a significant impact on the provision for the primary pupil referral unit (PRU) and also on provision for pregnant teenagers and young mothers.

Standards in the national tests and examinations in 2004 were reported in the previous HMI monitoring letter. The 11 pupils in Year 11 however are predicted to achieve GCSE passes in English and mathematics in the summer exam; four out of 11 at C or above in mathematics and seven in English language and literature. Standards in lessons varied widely and reflected the educational histories of individual pupils.

The quality of learning was satisfactory in ten lessons and in one lesson progress was unsatisfactory. Where learning was satisfactory pupils concentrated well, listened intently and were able to work independently, but did not have sufficient opportunities to extend their learning and make good progress. Pupils displayed effective social skills and showed they had the capacity to collaborate; however opportunities for collaborative work were underdeveloped with most learning being too closely controlled by the teacher. In the lesson where learning was unsatisfactory pupils did not concentrate consistently, were off task for a significant proportion of the lesson and were involved in incidents of low level misbehaviour.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory in all 11 lessons and in two lessons was good. This represents an improvement on the previous inspection where one lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory. However there is too little teaching that is good and a significant proportion of satisfactory teaching has weaknesses. This provides an insecure base for raising the attainment and progress of all pupils.

In the best lessons, planning was effective and appropriate learning objectives were identified and shared with the pupils. In these lessons teachers explained ideas and tasks clearly and made effective use of questions and further prompts to

ensure that pupils became involved and developed their understanding of the skills and concepts studied. Teachers supported pupils well with positive reinforcement and encouraged the pupils to apply themselves and extend their learning. In satisfactory lessons there was too much teacher direction, learning objectives lacked precision and too many closed questions were used. In these lessons the pace was not sufficiently brisk to maintain good progress in learning. Where support workers had a clear role they supported pupils effectively, but in too many lessons they were not sufficiently involved in the lesson for too much of the time.

The behaviour and attitudes of the pupils were good in two lessons, satisfactory in eight and unsatisfactory in a further one lesson. The staff have maintained and reinforced a supportive environment in which pupils respond positively to their teachers and other adults, although not all pupils are active participants in their learning. Staff used the registration period in the PRU effectively to create a calm and orderly start to the day. The sometimes challenging behaviour of pupils in the primary PRU was well managed by teachers and support workers. At times these pupils participated constructively in planned activities, co-operating with each other and adults appropriately. When their behaviour deteriorated, the pupils used agreed procedures to maintain self-discipline. During a morning break, older pupils socialised pleasantly with each other and adults and displayed maturity during a presentation on drugs awareness by a guest speaker.

The LEA has provided guidance on recording the attendance of the pupils more accurately, although there is no analysis of the data collected. Overall attendance remains a significant concern as most pupils still do not have access to full-time education. The number of exclusions rose to 14 during the spring term, which involved four pupils in the PRU.

The action plan has been appropriately amended by the headteacher and senior team. It prioritises actions more succinctly, identifying those who are responsible and the mechanisms by which actions will be monitored and evaluated. However, the pace at which plans are being implemented remains too slow. The headteacher has struggled to provide the necessary leadership to establish a cohesive senior team to take responsibility for unit improvement; this has been exacerbated by the long term absence of the deputy headteacher. Senior managers are unclear about their roles and do not fully understand their line management responsibilities as subject leaders. Frameworks for the monitoring of lesson planning and the quality of teaching are in place but not fully implemented. The LEA has recently appointed an associate headteacher to support the headteacher during the summer term and to strengthen the capacity of the leadership team. The management committee has begun to meet regularly and a newly appointed chair has identified experienced members to take responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of key issues. However, the strategic role of this group in securing improvement is not yet developed. This is unsatisfactory, given the time that has elapsed since the PRU was made subject to special measures and is, in part, due to the failure of the LEA to act urgently to provide clear terms of reference. Although recent support from LEA consultants has been greatly valued,

the LEA's strategy for the future of the PRU has not been clearly communicated to all stakeholders. A recent review of the appropriately revised LEA statement of action has recognised the need for a more co-ordinated approach to support improvement at all levels; however too much time has been lost in the interim period, during which progress in addressing key issues has been limited.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: provide pupils with their entitlement to full-time education and to provide a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. (This will involve resolving the issue of inadequate accommodation)

The outcomes of a curriculum review have enabled the PRU to plan to provide full-time education for groups of pupils who are anxious non-attenders in Key Stage 4 from September and to increase the provision for pupils in Key Stage 3 groups, although current plans will not fulfil their entitlement to full-time education. Senior managers are exploring ways to increase the breadth of the curriculum for instance, access to sports and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. Curriculum leaders have been identified and supported appropriately by consultants and the production of schemes of work are in the early stages of development. A decision is awaited from the LEA with regard to the relocation of provision for primary pupils in the PRU and the refurbishment of the PRU to increase and improve the quality of provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils. While a number of steps have been taken to address the complexities of the unit and to improve the quality of provision for all pupils, too much is still at the planning stage and a co-ordinated strategy is not evident.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 2: improve the quality of teaching and learning, in order to raise achievement

Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning have continued with the provision of training on the features of effective planning and teaching. Procedures for monitoring the quality of planning have recently been established, however agreed planning formats are still not being used effectively by all staff. The quality of teaching has been monitored by the unit effectiveness service, but individual professional development has not been planned to address weaknesses identified or to disseminate good practice. Senior managers have not yet implemented plans to undertake a comprehensive programme for monitoring teaching despite the provision of some training by the LEA. There is no clear view as to how the work of sessional staff and home tutors will be monitored.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 3: improve the quality of leadership, management and governance, including the strategic monitoring and evaluation, and support for improvement

The quality of leadership, management and governance at all levels remains fragile. There is a lack of strategic direction to ensure that the actions required to secure improvement are implemented at sufficient pace. Robust systems for monitoring and evaluation are not established and although a range of support has been recently made available to aid improvement, it is too early to measure its impact.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 4: put in place systematic arrangements for assessment and for tracking pupils' progress

After careful analysis by senior managers, baseline assessment materials have been ordered to support the attitudinal survey, adopted previously, as there is no comprehensive baseline data currently available against which to monitor pupils' progress. Estimated GCSE examination grades are in place for English and mathematics however and useful externally-produced data has now been provided by the LEA, to support target-setting for the majority of secondary age pupils. Staff are skilled in providing individual support to pupils and in encouraging them to strive for higher standards. Although there is no comprehensive system for setting targets for pupils, work on developing the agreed individual learning plans which will record targets and pupil progress is underway. Training in target-setting is to be provided shortly. Despite recent developments, progress towards developing a comprehensive assessment and recording process has been too slow.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 5: help more pupils to get back into unit

The re-integration of pupils is regularly reviewed by behaviour support workers and monitored by senior staff. Since the previous visit three pupils have been successfully re-integrated into the unit and strategies have supported the partial re-integration into the unit of a number of pupils who have had hospital or home tuition as a result of ill-health. New referral protocols for admission are planned for September to strengthen links with mainstream units and to ensure that baseline assessment data for individual pupils is available on admission. However the systems to monitor the duration of stay or progress made by all pupils towards their re-integration remain undeveloped.

Progress on this key issue is limited.