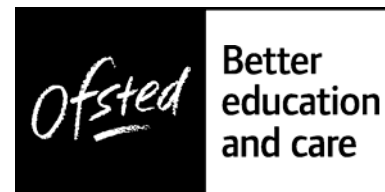


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Mrs S Bradley  
Headteacher  
Derby City Pupil Referral Unit  
c/o Special Educational Needs Support Service  
Kingsmead Centre  
Bridge Street  
Derby  
DE1 3LB

Dear Mrs Bradley

### **Implementation of Derby City Pupil Referral Unit's Action Plan**

Following the visit of Mr D Simpson HMI and Mrs S Morris-King HMI to your pupil referral unit (PRU) on 5 and 6 May 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 PRU 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 school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

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

The PRU is not permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management committee and the Director of Education for the City of Derby. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid  
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF DERBY CITY PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT'S ACTION PLAN**

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

During the visit 13 lessons or parts of lessons and one registration session were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of the management committee, other key staff and a representative of the LEA. 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 chair of the management committee and representatives from the LEA.

Following national advertisement, the acting headteacher was recently appointed as a permanent, substantive headteacher. Whilst the Peartree site has become the administrative centre for the PRU, delays in introducing appropriate software to gather data for monitoring purposes continues to impede its overall effectiveness. The number of sites has been reduced by two as a result of all Key Stage 3 education being based at Peartree and the relocation of some Key Stage 4 provision.

The pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the PRU are below average overall. The attainment of many of the pupils has been affected by their sporadic attendance at school and at the PRU, and by their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Moreover, the learning of many of the pupils is frequently disrupted by their behaviour which sometimes results in their removal or self-removal from lessons. In lessons there was a similar profile of attainment. Even when the pupils made at least satisfactory progress, the standard of their work was generally below that expected for their age. However, the Key Stage 4 pupils are being entered for an increasing range of examinations. At the Key Stage 4 study centre, almost all of the pupils are taking a range of GCSE examinations, including English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), home economics (childcare) and design and technology. A number of the Year 11 pupils in the other centres have gained Entry Level qualifications, for example, in mathematics. Adult learning qualifications are used suitably to give the pupils access to a greater range of certification, and work-related learning accreditation has been recently been introduced in several of the Key Stage 4 bases. Appropriately, all of the Year 9 pupils who attend the PRU on a full-time basis have been entered for at least one of the national Key Stage 3 tests. Almost all of the pupils in Year 6 took the national tests in 2005.

The pupils made satisfactory or better progress in 11 of the 13 lessons, including three in which their progress was good. Where progress was good the pupils were focused on their work, concentrated, responded well to the staff's careful interventions and co-operated effectively with each other. Even where they were lacking in confidence the pupils were prepared to attempt new tasks. In several of

the lessons where progress was satisfactory or poorer, the pupils quickly disengaged from unstimulating learning activities, or refused to engage from the start of the lesson. The pupils established a rate of progress which was comfortable for them but did not sufficiently challenge or extend their skills and understanding. At other times the pupils were dismissive of adult support.

Individual target setting at Key Stage 3 is embryonic. Individual education plans do not support the pupils' progress or inform the teachers' planning. Target setting to help the pupils to improve their behaviour is insufficiently rigorous.

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 11 lessons, including three in which it was good. Where teaching was good the lessons were well planned and the activities met the needs of the pupils. The staff's skilful use of questioning allowed the pupils to develop their ideas. The pupils were expected to work at a suitable pace and responded accordingly. The staff required the pupils to co-operate and to maintain their levels of motivation, which they did. There was a judicious blend of challenge and support.

In many of the lessons, however, the teaching was insufficiently demanding. Activities kept the pupils occupied, but lacked challenge. There was inadequate focus on the need to develop the pupils' thinking and reasoning skills. In some of the lessons the adults failed to establish mutual respect, which had a negative impact on the pupils' progress. Inappropriate pupil behaviour was not dealt with firmly enough. In some centres these factors have resulted in a culture in which the pupils are insufficiently challenged in both their behaviour and their learning.

Lesson planning overall lacked rigour. There was a lack of attention to the pupils' individual needs and to the importance of accelerating the pace of learning. Teaching assistants were not always deployed effectively. In the best lessons they were indistinguishable from the teachers and played a pivotal role in the lesson.

In some of the classrooms the pupils' work is carefully displayed. The art room at Peartree is particularly stimulating, with good attention to developing the pupils' cultural awareness.

The pupils' personal development was satisfactory or better in 11 of the 13 lessons. It was good in three and unsatisfactory in two. As at the last visit, high levels of staffing and the small numbers of pupils in each class helped to maintain order, although in Key Stage 3, challenging behaviour disrupts lessons and prevents the site providing the necessary security and safety for its pupils. Inappropriate conduct was not consistently challenged. During the visit there were several instances of overly boisterous and dangerous behaviour. Across the PRU, the majority of the pupils are co-operative and polite but low self-esteem and a history of educational difficulties have resulted in casual attitudes to learning. At the Key Stage 4 study centre the pupils were well motivated and keen to achieve. However, on occasions at the Peartree and Sinfin sites, the pupils used

inappropriate language to challenge the authority of adults and treated lessons as social, rather than learning, activities.

Attendance for the PRU for the spring term 2005 was 62 per cent. This is worse than the figure for the autumn term 2004, which was 66 per cent. There is a huge variation in the attendance at the different centres which form the PRU. The spring term attendance at the Key Stage 2 centre, for example, was 83 per cent, whereas the attendance at one of the Key Stage 4 centre was 37 per cent. The PRU's analysis of its attendance data for Key Stage 3 has improved. A well designed computer-based spreadsheet is helping the headteacher to gain a clearer overview of each pupil's attendance. Targets are set for the individual and for the group, and the pupils' progress towards meeting each target is noted. Sensibly, this analysis includes a benchmark of the pupils' attendance for the last term in mainstream school. The headteacher's intention to extend this system to all the PRU's centres is wise.

There were 77 incidents which resulted in fixed-term exclusions during the spring term. This represents an improvement from the autumn term, in which there were 96 fixed-term exclusions from the PRU. The vast majority of the exclusions were from the Key Stage 3 provision. Very few Key Stage 4 pupils were excluded in either term. This pattern has continued into the summer term.

The leadership of the headteacher has effectively begun to address the need for a shared ethos across the many sites of the PRU. Joint training sessions, regular communication and senior leadership team meetings which monitor and evaluate the PRU's effectiveness are significant improvements. Performance management objectives have been agreed with all teachers which include visits to other institutions to look at good practice. Whilst these are proving valuable in developing expertise, the headteacher recognises the need for a sharper focus for future visits to ensure that teachers and providers know what should be exemplified in order to improve the PRU's practice. Self supported review for teaching assistants and appraisal for administrative staff have been helpfully introduced.

An audit of staffing needs has resulted in the advertisement of two posts in Maths and ICT, and Art and Design, and further appointments are anticipated.

The LEA is providing useful and extensive financial support. An associate headteacher with experience of taking a secondary school out of special measures, and a school improvement officer are providing helpful advice. Recent monitoring of teaching at Key Stages 2 and 4 was of varying quality and it is too soon to measure the impact of the work of the Key Stage 3 Strategy team. The LEA has a challenging agenda to implement by September: appointments to the leadership and teaching teams, as well as establishing suitable accommodation for the PRU's provision. Overall, the quality and the impact of the support provided by the LEA remains reasonable.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: develop a clear strategy for the structure and development of the unit by establishing an admissions and exit policy to meet the needs of all of the pupils on its register and provide all pupils with a taught week of a maximum of 23.5 hours**

The PRU has successfully reintegrated a few pupils into mainstream schools. However, overall there is insufficient emphasis placed on exit strategies for the pupils at the time at which they are placed in the PRU. No LEA representative currently attends the PRU's placement panel meetings. Moreover, although the headteacher has drafted an appropriate protocol for reintegration, the LEA's responsibility for ensuring that the pupils are reintegrated as soon as appropriate is insufficiently defined.

The brief admissions statement for the PRU has been agreed by the management committee. Although the statement is appropriate, again the LEA's role is unclear. The regulation of admission to, and exit from, the PRU needs to be carefully considered by the LEA alongside its sensible plans for an exclusion advisory panel and the protocol for the pupils who are "hard to place."

The number of pupils who are offered full-time provision at the PRU has increased, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 3, where the majority of the pupils have been given a full-time placement.

Progress is reasonable.

### **2: establish effective leadership and management**

The strategic leadership of the PRU continues to be good. Its future is clearly established within the LEA's wider special educational needs support service (SENSS) provision. However, greater clarity is required to distinguish the responsibilities of the headteacher and the LEA line manager for the implementation of the action plan and operational detail, for example, with regard to the policy for admissions. Following the appointment of the headteacher, two deputy headteacher appointments have been advertised to strengthen the leadership of the PRU and behaviour support throughout the City of Derby. As a result of these changes and the negotiation of job descriptions with unions, there has been slippage in the envisaged timescale to introduce a new management structure. Additionally, the PRU recognises that it requires an identified special educational needs co-ordinator across the sites. The PRU has set a budget for 2005-6 although some specific details have to be resolved.

The appointment of the headteacher has given the PRU greater stability and her leadership has provided it with greater effectiveness. Minutes of leadership meetings show clear accountability in terms of responsibility for actions and the deadlines for their implementation. Key stage managers are playing a fuller role in

monitoring and strategically directing the PRU's work. However, the headteacher recognises that lesson observations, evaluation of lesson plans and work scrutiny, need to be more rigorous by the autumn term.

A thorough staff handbook and many policies have recently been adopted, a significant number of which are suitably due for review in the near future to enable further consideration and scrutiny. These strengthen the cohesion of the PRU although it is too early to measure their impact to improve the consistency of its work, for example on behaviour management. The PRU is aware that resources need to be reallocated across the sites and that future expenditure must be more effectively targeted at priorities for improvement.

Progress is reasonable.

### **3: rationalise the number of sites so that they are all of acceptable quality and meet health and safety requirements**

The number of sites has reduced. The LEA has a coherent programme to improve the quality of sites and integrate provision into mainstream education over time, dependent upon funding from Building Schools for the Future. Significant investment is planned to improve the site for Key Stage 3, including additional resources from the LEA. However, the LEA's asset management team are due to identify suitable sites for 2004-05 before the end of May, including relocating the Key Stage 4 study centre. Consequently, decisions on suitable sites will be late in the academic year to prepare for September which is not helpful for the PRU, particularly as it is trying to improve continuity for the pupils who have experienced disruption in their previous education. Health and Safety reports have resulted in improvements at the Sinfin and Derwent Youth Centre sites. However, as reported after the last visit, these sites are inadequate.

Progress is reasonable.

### **4: appoint a management committee specifically for the unit in order to develop systems for working with staff, to help share its direction and to support its work**

The management committee effectively monitors the PRU's work. Minutes of meetings record clearly how it is performing as a critical friend, identifying actions to be taken and who is responsible for their completion. They have a clear picture of the PRU's work and are aware of the need to regularly review policies, admissions, attendance and the reintegration of the pupils into mainstream education. Detailed Health and Safety reports provide a helpful programme to improve individual sites.

Progress is good.

## **5: raise pupils' attainment across all key stages**

The curriculum at some of the Key Stage 4 centres has improved. As reported above, the pupils have the opportunity to take an increased range of accredited courses. Curriculum audits are beginning to be used to identify the need for further development.

At Key Stage 3, positive links with partner providers have enabled the PRU to offer accredited creative arts work. The Key Stage 2 curriculum has been enriched by the addition of swimming and music.

At Key Stage 3 the staff have begun to collect a range of data which they are using to set targets for the pupils and to track their progress. This useful development is at an early stage. The headteacher has introduced a useful referral form which is starting to provide helpful information about the pupils who are admitted to the PRU.

Importantly, the staff have received training from LEA consultants on aspects of teaching and learning, including assessment. At Key Stage 3 there were a few examples of the teachers starting to use national curriculum levels when marking the pupils' books. Some of the Key Stage 4 work is well marked with clear targets for improvement. Several staff have used their visits to mainstream schools to make useful links with colleagues in order to improve the curriculum and assessment further.

Progress is reasonable.