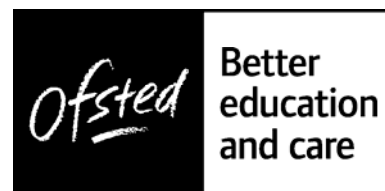


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29 November 2005

Mrs S Bradley
Headteacher
Derby City Pupil Referral Unit
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Dear Mrs Bradley

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF DERBY CITY PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Introduction

Following my visit to your pupil referral unit (PRU) on 16 and 17 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a representative of the management committee, other key staff and a representative of the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last visit, two deputy headteachers have been appointed, one responsible for the management of the PRU, the other responsible for the management of the City of Derby's behaviour support service. Two teachers have been promoted to take responsibility for information and communication technology (ICT) and to act as a teaching and learning coach. Additional appointments have been made to fill posts in mathematics and ICT and Art and Design. Two sites used to teach Key Stage 4 pupils have been relocated and significant refurbishment work has taken place at the Peartree Key Stage 3 site. Proposals to change the staffing structure have gone out

for consultation. If implemented, these will have significant implications for how the PRU is managed.

Achievement and standards

The pupils' levels of attainment are adversely affected by their social, emotional, behavioural or other learning difficulties, as well as a history of poor attendance in many cases. Consequently in lessons most pupils are working well below the standards expected of their age.

National test and examination results for 2005 vary widely with the best attainment at Key Stage 2 and the poorest at Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests just under half of the pupils attained the level expected for their age. At Key Stage 3, only a tenth of pupils reached the expected level for their age in English, mathematics and science and over a third were absent from the tests or not entered. Too few pupils had progressed by at least one level over the previous three years. Impressively, given their educational histories, nearly a third of pupils in Year 11 attained at least one GCSE, one achieved a grade C in English, two in ICT and three in home economics. Just under half of the pupils attained accreditation through the wide range of courses the PRU provides. However, over a quarter left their compulsory schooling without any qualifications.

Whilst the PRU is gathering data half-termly on the pupils' performance, it is aware that its current arrangements for setting targets do not sufficiently take account of the learning difficulties of individual pupils. At present the PRU is not sufficiently rigorous in setting individual targets and too few lessons expect the pupils to make the good progress necessary to overcome their past underachievement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- **Raise the pupil's attainment across all key stages** – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

The majority of pupils who attend the PRU's sites are co-operative and treat adults and one another with respect. However, many lack confidence and rely heavily on adult support to complete tasks. Where teaching is most effective the pupils are prepared to make sustained oral contributions and attend to one another's ideas.

Occasionally the pupils' behaviour significantly disrupts lessons, although this was only observed in Key Stage 3 during this visit. The atmosphere at the Peartree site is much calmer and the activities introduced for socialising time, including football sessions run by the new deputy headteacher, have had a positive effect on the pupils' attitudes.

Comparing the figures for the first half-term of this year with the equivalent time in 2004, the number of exclusions has fallen by 37 per cent and the number of physical assaults has also significantly declined.

The rate of attendance has improved to 71 per cent in the first half-term of this academic year. The sustained hard work on individual and group attendance targets has resulted in an overall reduction in absence although significant variation between sites remains.

Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Features of the more successful teaching include good relationships based on personal rapport, carefully planned activities which focus upon developing the skills of the pupils, clear references to GCSE or National Curriculum criteria to help pupils understand the level they are performing at and what they need to do to improve, effective questioning which require pupils to justify their ideas and opinions, the use of appropriate technical vocabulary by teachers, and marking which summarised what the pupils have accomplished. In the lessons that were barely satisfactory or poorer, too many activities were merely tasks which kept the pupils occupied, there was a lack of pace, expectations of pupils were too low, there was too much teacher talk and dominance of learning activities, and planning took too little account of the individual needs of pupils. The role and authority of teaching assistants remains too variable.

There have been improvements in the procedures for completing and using individual education plans (IEPs), including the commitment to produce an initial IEP within three weeks of a pupil being admitted to the PRU and a greater focus on learning and academic targets rather than behavioural ones. However, there is still too much inconsistency in format, the quality of targets and their application in the classroom.

At Key Stages 2 and 3 pupils receive an appropriate curriculum which is enhanced by innovations, such as film making and exhibiting their art work. The purpose of individual sites used for Key Stage 4 provision is clear and the pupils are generally well allocated. However, too few pupils are receiving their entitlement to a full time taught week. Whilst admissions procedures have improved, the City of Derby does not provide suitable educational alternatives for those pupils who are on long term placements in the PRU. Over half the pupils remain in the PRU for over twelve months which is unacceptable.

Judgement

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- ***To develop a clear strategy for the structure and development of the unit and provide all pupils on its register with a taught week of a maximum of 24 hours at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10 and 25 hours in Year 11*** –satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

Impressive developments by the local authority have placed the PRU's provision firmly within the City of Derby's overall behaviour support service. A good range of protocols and policies have been established for secondary school pupils which have reduced exclusions across the City. These now need to be extended to primary school pupils. The City's significant investment in personnel and improved accommodation is testament to its commitment to meeting the needs of all its young people. Many of the relocations of sites have improved the pupils' learning environment but the Derwent Youth Centre remains unsatisfactory and adversely affects the pupils' learning. Good medium to long term plans are being implemented to secure good bases for all provision.

The role of the headteacher is now much clearer, and benefits from her significant involvement in developing support strategies for pupils at risk of exclusion from mainstream schooling. She has a good understanding of the areas of the PRU's work which need to be improved. The appointment of two deputy headteachers has provided fresh perspective, enthusiasm and the capacity to provide coherence between the work of the PRU and the behaviour support system in general. The deputy headteacher responsible for the PRU is beginning to tackle issues of consistency across the Key Stage 4 sites and to contribute to the monitoring of achievement, lesson planning and classroom practice. The management of the PRU has been further strengthened by the appointment of a teaching and learning coach and an ICT co-ordinator both of whom are expected to improve classroom practice. Consequently the PRU is well placed to significantly improve the monitoring of teaching and learning and the quality of provision experienced by its pupils.

The management committee is knowledgeable and provides a wealth of experience which informs the PRU's work. They have a clear sense of the priorities for improvement and have appropriately produced a calendar of their monitoring activities during this academic year. The role of the sub-committees is developing and how much influence the personnel committee have over the proposed staffing restructuring will be a measure of their ability to affect change.

Judgement

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- **To establish effective leadership and management** – satisfactory progress
- **To rationalise the number of bases so that they are all of acceptable quality and meet health and safety requirements** – good progress
- **To appoint a management committee, specifically for the unit in order to develop systems for working with staff, to help shape its direction and to support its work** – satisfactory progress

External support

The LA has provided strong strategic direction for the PRU and supported its work through effective developments, such as the introduction of an exclusion advisory panel and the appointment of a complex case manager, which have helped to reduce permanent exclusions from secondary schools and enhanced the PRU's role in identifying strategies for pupils at risk of exclusion across the City.

The LA conducted a number of helpful observations of Key stage 3 classes in the summer but this has not been sustained this term. As the LA's lesson observations have been of variable quality in the past, the PRU wants to be assured that advisory support will have the credibility necessary to improve teaching.

As a result of the appointment of two deputy headteachers, the headteacher has made less use of the associate headteacher identified to support her. Nevertheless, this arrangement remains a strong external support, not least because the associate headteacher is a prominent member of the management committee.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Priorities for further improvement

- Make lessons more challenging so that pupils make greater progress
- Increase the proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 who receive a full-time education
- Improve monitoring procedures to make teachers accountable for ensuring that individual pupils fulfil their potential
- Establish suitable placements such that fewer pupils are based at the PRU for more than twelve months

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management committee and the Director of Education for the City of Derby.

Yours sincerely

David Simpson
H M Inspector

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