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10 November 2005

Mr Frost  
The Headteacher  
Warrington Horizon Pupil Referral Unit  
Horizon House  
Grappenhall Campus  
Church Lane  
Warrington  
WA4 3ES

Dear Mr. Frost

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF Warrington Horizon Pupil Referral Unit**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit to your pupil referral unit on 8 and 9 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### **Evidence**

During the visit six lessons, a breakfast session and a registration period were observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the teacher responsible for Key Stage 3, a representative from the management committee, the pupil support officer and the consultant employed as the local authority link adviser. Informal discussions were held with other staff and samples of work examined. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the teacher responsible for KS3 and three representatives of the local authority.

## Context

There have been significant changes to the staffing of the school since the last monitoring inspection. A new deputy headteacher has taken up post and there is a new teacher in charge of the Key Stage 3 provision. A new teacher has been appointed to the Key Stage 3 unit, who will take up post in January 2006, and a new temporary member of staff has commenced work in the Key Stage 4 unit. The planned move of the Key Stage 4 unit from temporary accommodation in the local further education college grounds to refurbished accommodation on the site of a former special school has been postponed until December. The college site is undergoing redevelopment and the unit has been relocated to temporary accommodation on a small area adjacent to a car park. This is an unfortunate delay and the unsatisfactory site is resulting in considerable difficulty in managing pupil supervision over the lunch period. A bid for funding to allow the transfer of the Key Stage 3 provision to the new site has failed and this will result in the unit continuing to operate as a split site provision.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement overall is satisfactory. The pupils' progress was satisfactory in five lessons and unsatisfactory in one lesson.

In the lessons where the progress was satisfactory pupils made gains in knowledge and improved their basic skills. In a Key Stage 4 English lesson pupils were taught the techniques used to create tension and suspense in film production and began to understand how these could be applied to writing. They found the work interesting and engaged well with the task asking appropriate questions. In a Year 11 science lesson pupils worked hard to gain an understanding of the role of the heart in the circulation system. The pupils gained a sound understanding of the processes involved and the majority were able to recall key terminology. In a number of these lessons, although pupils made satisfactory progress, there were missed opportunities to extend their learning further by allowing them greater independence. Where the progress was unsatisfactory the explanation of a mathematical concept was not sufficiently detailed and pupils completed the associated task mechanically with little understanding of the purpose of the work. Although pupils were enthusiastic in gathering data and using information and communication technology to record it, this did not extend their learning.

The standards of attainment are below those found nationally, unsurprisingly, for pupils who have experienced considerable disruption to their education. In 2005 the three eligible Year 9 pupils were entered for the end of Key Stage national tests. Only one pupil gained the nationally expected Level 5 and this was only in mathematics. In Key Stage 4 thirteen pupils in Years 10 and 11 were entered for GCSE mathematics and achieved grades ranging from E to unclassified. Two pupils were entered for art at GCSE gaining grades C and E respectively.

## Personal development and well-being

The pupils' behaviour in all of the lessons observed was satisfactory. This maintains the improving trend noted on the last monitoring inspection. In the lessons observed the pupils were generally polite and responded to requests made of them. The pupils behaved sensibly in practical lessons and adopted safe working practices, for example, in a food technology lesson they followed appropriate procedures for maintaining hygiene. A determination to establish high standards of behaviour has resulted in significantly higher levels of fixed term exclusion for the first half of this term than in the similar period last year. The pupils' attitudes to learning are often too passive and they display little enthusiasm for much of their work.

In general pupils are adequately supported to develop skills to ensure their future economic well-being, for example, through the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills. The development of economic awareness is more limited but Key Stage 3 pupils were seen evaluating the relative value for money of cakes in a food technology lesson. However, opportunities for pupils directly to develop enterprise and work related skills in Key Stage 4 are inadequate. The unit encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles through sport and leisure and through reference to healthy lifestyles in lessons. However, prior to the start of school two pupils were observed openly smoking at the entrance to the Horizons Centre.

The attendance rates in Key Stages 3 and 4 for the first half of the autumn term were 76% and 64% respectively. This represents an improvement over the same period in the previous year and over attendance for the summer term 2005. However, despite the best efforts of the pupil support officer and other staff to address this issue, attendance remains unsatisfactory. In addition punctuality at the start of the day and at the ends of break and lunchtimes is a significant weakness at the Horizon Centre. On the second day of the inspection only three of the 17 students were present at the start of registration.

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

- fulfil its obligations to eliminate racial discrimination and promote good race relations was judged good on a previous inspection and was signed off.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was satisfactory in five lessons and unsatisfactory in one lesson. In the lessons that were satisfactory there were some good features. The planning for lessons included an appropriate level of detail and there were clearly identified learning objectives. An appropriate range of materials was available to support learning and there was effective use of information and communications technology. Teachers had sound or good subject knowledge and their explanations of the tasks were clear. There were positive relationships and effective behaviour management. However, there remain important areas for development. In particular the use of assessment to provide guidance to the pupils on how to improve is

inconsistent and there is a need to encourage the pupils to take more responsibility for their learning through allowing time for independent reflection on tasks. In some lessons the use of closed questions constrained the assessment of the depth of pupils' understanding and there were missed opportunities for teachers to model the skills required from pupils in their work.

The systematic assessment of the pupils' work is developing with the inclusion of a baseline assessment for each pupil within the curriculum co-ordinators file. The setting of achievement targets for pupils is developing but is not yet consistently in place. Marking is regular but the use of comments to advise pupils on how to improve their work is inconsistent. This remains an important area for development and is currently unsatisfactory.

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 now meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Subject co-ordinators are developing curriculum files that include appropriate medium term plans drawing on published schemes of work to support effective planning. However, these are at an early stage of development and have only begun to impact on planning this term. At Key Stage 4 the unit now offers full time education to all students. This reflects a recent initiative in which four students have been offered a four day programme of vocational training in addition to a home study package to meet their particular needs. However, despite the efforts of the headteacher to establish links with other 14-19 providers, the curriculum on offer at Key Stage 4 is limited to the core subjects, sports and leisure, PHSE/ Citizenship, and an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course which currently focuses on the creative arts. The extension of access to GCSE courses is a positive feature but the lack of access to a wider range of courses including vocational options and work related learning is a weakness. The curriculum does not reflect the curriculum policy of the authority for the unit.

The support for the care and guidance of pupils has been extended through a range of initiatives and is satisfactory. The system for effective behaviour management including the awarding of points leading to rewards has been revised and staff training provided by the local authority to ensure greater consistency in its use. Staff discuss the points achieved by pupils at the end of each lesson to reinforce good behaviour and there is effective use of peer assessment. In a Key Stage 4 registration pupils were engaged in discussing the rewards they had achieved and clearly valued the system. An audit of behaviour has been completed by all staff to establish a baseline of the current position in order to allow more detailed evaluation of the impact of initiatives. There are clear behavioural targets in place for all pupils within individual education plans and these are displayed within classrooms. Senior staff are now monitoring pupil development systematically and regular feedback to parents is provided.

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

- raise the standard of teaching to help pupils learn and achieve more – satisfactory progress
- ensure that the curriculum meets the specification of the local authority's policy – inadequate progress

- improve the assessment of pupils' learning - inadequate progress
- improve the monitoring of their personal development – satisfactory progress
- improve procedures for helping pupils to improve their behaviour, attitudes, attendance and personal development – satisfactory progress
- provide full time education for all pupils – satisfactory progress

## **Leadership and management**

The leadership team has been strengthened with the appointment of the deputy headteacher and a teacher in charge of Key Stage 3 provision. There is an increasingly cohesive senior management team who are committed to the success of the school. The recent changes in staffing have been taken as an opportunity to review the development of the unit and to establish clear priorities and high expectations. The head teacher has now established a programme for monitoring teaching and provides advice and feedback to support all staff in developing their expertise. This has been well supported by the link consultant, the behaviour and attendance consultant and advanced skills teachers. Revised pupil groupings in both key stages have also allowed staff to target teaching more effectively to the needs of pupils. Systematic approaches to monitoring attainment and achievement are being established. However, these are not yet consistently being applied. The monitoring of personal development is improving. The reporting of progress to the management board has improved and they have a clear awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the unit and are challenging the headteacher to improve provision. During the summer term there was insufficient focus on addressing strategic issues due to staffing difficulties and valuable time was lost. However, since September this weakness has been addressed. The unit's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is broadly accurate but a more analytical approach to evaluation is required. There is now a sound base to address remaining issues and to accelerate the overall rate of progress.

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

- address weaknesses in leadership and management – satisfactory progress

## **External support**

The unit has been supported effectively by the local authority, which has employed an external consultant to act as the link adviser and to provide support and training to the headteacher. In addition the consultant for behaviour and attendance has provided effective support in the development of policies and has delivered behaviour management training, which was valued by staff. This support has been valued by the headteacher.

## **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Act decisively to improve punctuality

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the managing board and the interim Strategic Director for Children's Services.

Yours sincerely

Garry Jones  
**H M Inspector**