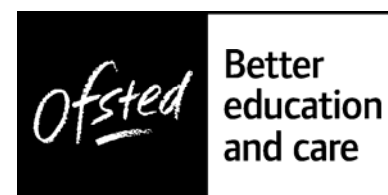


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25 January 2006

Mr Ritch. A. Barras
Acting headteacher
Ethos Pupil Referral Unit
Kess Centre
Off Rawthorpe Terrace
Rawthorpe
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire.
HD5 9NY

Dear Mr Barras,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ETHOS PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Introduction

Following my visit with Mr Henry Morton, Additional Inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 January, 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 June 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

Inspectors observed the unit's work, including 9 parts of lessons and a visit to a nearby hospital to discuss provision. Documents were scrutinised and the team met with the acting headteacher, other nominated staff, the chair of the management committee and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the previous visit, the unit has experienced a period of stability, which has enabled staff to focus on key areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Standards achieved by pupils were reported on the last visit and reflect the disrupted educational histories of the pupils who attend the unit. Staff and pupils have made a satisfactory adjustment to the introduction of full time education, which has improved the rate of progress made, in particular, by the group of anxious non-attenders. All pupils in this group have the opportunity to achieve 5 GCSE's. Achievement in English and mathematics remain satisfactory; achievement is improving in science and in information and communication technology (ICT) as a result of more focused lesson planning which follows revised schemes of work.

Progress made by pupils in lessons is satisfactory, reflecting improvements in the quality of teaching and the increasing self-confidence of pupils. Improved recreational facilities for lunch and break times, which are shared with staff, have provided pupils with the opportunity to develop their social skills and promote more positive attitudes to learning.

Individual learning plans identify appropriate targets and success criteria which support personal development. However, too few relate to academic progress and although records show progress made by individual pupils, there has been no systematic review of progress made by different groups over time.

Personal development and well-being

Relationships between pupils and adults, and between the pupils themselves, are good. Most pupils come to school prepared to work; they respond positively in lessons, answering questions and taking part in discussions. For many pupils, attendance is satisfactory given their previous history, but it is still below the levels expected for pupils of the same age in mainstream schools. More effective strategies to monitor attendance are in place, although these are not used to measure improvement over time. Punctuality is also satisfactory. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, including the more vulnerable girls, and their self esteem is raised. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing the personal attributes that equip them to gain employment or training on leaving. Arrangements which determine the length of stay of young mothers are now established. The unit has worked to re-integrate anxious non-attenders back into their schools and the process and procedures by which it does this are under review.

Judgement

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

- help more pupils to get back into school - satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and meet the needs of pupils. Inspection evidence supports the judgements of recent monitoring of teaching by the LA. Relationships between pupils and adults are good and a strong emphasis is now given to developing pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT; as well as in their personal and social education.

All the lessons observed contained some good features. These included detailed planning which reflected the needs of individual pupils, good use made of visits to local places of interest to provide stimulus for teaching, and a range of activities which engaged and sustained the pupils' interest.

Pupils made most progress where learning objectives were clearly explained, expectations were high and questioning extended pupils' learning. Where learning was satisfactory, pupils were not sufficiently challenged; the lesson's pace was not brisk enough and too little was achieved by the pupils themselves because teachers missed opportunities for pupils to participate actively. Insufficient evaluation of pupils' learning in lessons took place in order to provide additional challenge or support.

Assessment of individual needs takes place when pupils arrive at the unit and the information is used to set appropriate targets, which are recorded clearly in individual learning plans. These are shared with pupils and parents, so that they may be involved in evaluating progress. Individual learning plans are used to tailor learning to meet specific needs and teachers measure and chart individual pupils' academic progress. However, the quality of planning is variable, for example in the focus of targets. Inconsistent communication with pupils' mainstream schools means that many arrive with incomplete information about their past attainment. Consequently, teachers are sometimes unclear about how to plan a curriculum, or individual lessons, that challenge pupils at the appropriate level.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Good attention is given to English, mathematics, ICT and science, although issues surrounding the improvement of accommodation to improve provision and raise standards have not been resolved. The unit still awaits confirmation of starting dates for the planned building programme. This is unsatisfactory and is having a detrimental effect on plans to introduce practical work in science and improve opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum.

Judgement

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

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, in order to raise achievement - satisfactory progress
- put in place systematic arrangements for assessment and for tracking pupils' progress - satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

Following his appointment last September, the acting headteacher has provided strong leadership and established the foundations on which to build improvement from a low baseline. He has reviewed the roles of staff and identified a group to take responsibility for key areas for improvement. Staff morale has improved and a team approach is beginning to emerge. Most share a commitment to making the necessary changes to raise standards and have welcomed training to address identified priorities. Arrangements to support performance management have been established. Although the process of self-evaluation by senior leaders is at an early stage of development, outcomes of monitoring by the LA have been used to inform the production of a concise action plan. A number of actions taken by different groups of staff have increased the pace of improvement, for example in the scrutiny of lesson planning. The headteacher recognises that the next step is to develop a co-ordinated strategy, involving all staff, to monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions taken to inform future planning. Although there is still ground to be gained following a period of limited progress, the capacity exists within the unit to secure improvement at a faster rate.

The management committee has been strengthened by the addition of members with relevant expertise and knowledge. Members of the committee have taken responsibility for the overview of different areas of the unit to improve their understanding of its work. Good practice identified by the unit, as a result of outreach work, is being used to set up protocols to guide the committee in establishing the balance between supporting the unit and holding it to account.

Judgement

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

- improve the quality of leadership, management and governance, including the strategic monitoring and evaluation, and support for improvement – satisfactory progress.

External support

- The LA has continued to support the unit appropriately and consultant support has targeted relevant areas for improvement such as assessment for learning. The most recent monitoring by the local authority has proved useful in helping the senior leaders to identify priorities for action. The school contact officer shares the frustration of the unit in the delay in the start of the building

programme to improve accommodation and address a number of inadequacies in current provision.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop strategies to assess pupils' learning in lessons, so that they can be appropriately challenged and supported.
- Ensure that individual learning plans contain sufficient baseline information and targets against which progress can accurately be measured.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders to assess the impact of actions taken to address areas for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Lifelong learning for Kirklees.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey
H M Inspector