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Ms D Horlock
Head of Centre
The New Broadwalk Pupil Referral Unit
The Broadwalk Centre
Belvedere Road
Salford
M6 5EJ

Dear Ms Horlock

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE NEW BROADWALK PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Introduction

Following my visit with Denise Shields, additional inspector, to your centre on 15 and 16 March 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2005.

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed the centre's work, visited seven lessons, talked informally with pupils, scrutinised documents and met with you and members of staff, the chair of the management committee and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The deputy head of Centre took up her post in January 2006. On the first day of the monitoring visit, most pupils were off site for part or all of the day on curriculum enrichment activities.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' attainment on entry remains generally below nationally expected levels, and reflects their disrupted educational histories. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are often low, but in lessons too little is done to address this and raise pupils' basic skills. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, but this is insufficient to close the gaps in their learning. Pupils make good progress when they are engaged in practical activities, for instance in the off-site enrichment programme and when lessons really motivate them. The very small number of pupils involved in the 'Toe-by-Toe' initiative achieve well and their reading ages have improved as a result. However, progress in lessons is slowed because teachers do not match the work closely enough to meet individual needs and abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour remains satisfactory as a result of a range of strategies introduced to promote higher expectations and boost self-esteem. In most lessons, pupils followed teachers' instructions although the challenging behaviour of a few slowed the pace of learning. The procedures to manage behaviour are understood by pupils and followed appropriately by teachers. Learning mentors have sought new ways to reward pupils for good behaviour using the points system established last term; for example, a recent focus has reduced significantly the use of poor language around the centre. The points awarded to pupils on a daily basis are recorded and are referred to by some tutors during the session on preparing for learning each morning. The centre sees this early morning session as a good opportunity to strengthen relationships and build self-esteem. Inspectors agree with this view, but this time was not consistently used by all tutors to set high expectations, review progress and set learning goals for the day.

Attitudes to learning are variable; pupils enjoyed the opportunities presented by the programme for curriculum enrichment and responded with enthusiasm, developing useful skills for the future and learning to work as part of a team. In lessons at the centre, pupils displayed attitudes that reflected their level of interest in the work set. At times, some pupils did not settle quickly and lost concentration too easily. Staff recognise the need to develop those strategies which engage and sustain an interest for learning, especially for those pupils with more challenging behaviour.

Staff have worked relentlessly with the support of external agencies to increase attendance, although it remains unsatisfactory overall. Attendance is thoroughly monitored and absences rigorously followed up; good attendance is regularly celebrated in weekly assemblies. Following consultation with the school council, the decision was taken not to delay the start of the day to overcome traffic delays which can affect punctuality. Instead, the centre has been successful in bidding for funding to operate a minibus to collect pupils and bring them to school; this will begin after Easter.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- Improve the attendance and punctuality of pupils so that they have the opportunity to achieve well - inadequate progress, although satisfactory progress has been made in implementing those strategies likely to raise attendance
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour and personal development - satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The off-site activities organised through the 'I can do' programme have had a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Those pupils who attend enjoy taking part, work hard and are proud of their achievements. The more formal curriculum, however, is not sufficiently meeting all pupils' needs.

Of the seven lessons observed, six were satisfactory or better, including two that were good. In all lessons relationships were good and humour was often used to good effect. In almost all lessons the reinforcement of positive behaviour ensured that lessons proceeded without interruption. Strengths in teaching included the use of good questioning to assess pupils' understanding, a range of suitable short activities and the effective use of the concluding plenary session to reinforce key teaching points. In lessons characterised by these features pupils remained on task, willingly contributed to the lesson and made good progress. In too many lessons, however, the work was mundane and not all pupils were suitably challenged. Because of this they lost interest and became very reliant on adults to help them complete their work. Teachers did not sufficiently focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy to close the gaps in pupils' learning. Consequently in too many instances pupils were reluctant to undertake written work. Progress slowed as a result and pupils did not achieve as well as they could.

The centre has been too slow in developing a robust assessment system. Although initial assessment is carried out in English, mathematics and science to establish a baseline when pupils enter the centre, this is not used well to measure progress and raise standards. There is no coherent system for gathering data so that teachers can establish how well pupils are doing. The data collected is not used to inform lesson planning and consequently work is not meeting the needs of all pupils. Pupils' individual education plans do not focus sufficiently on academic achievement.

Pupils do not all understand how to improve their learning. Some limited informal discussions take place with pupils about how well they are doing and what level they have reached in the National Curriculum. However, very few pupils understand what these levels mean in relation to the work they do in lessons and marking does not routinely give advice about how to improve.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- Improve teaching so that the work set for pupils is more effectively matched to their individual needs and abilities - inadequate progress.
- Improve the assessment of pupils' work and progress so that pupils are better informed of what they need to do to improve their achievement - inadequate progress

Leadership and management

The senior leadership team has been strengthened following the appointment of the deputy headteacher, who has taken responsibility for some of the day-to-day running of the centre and the mentoring of staff. This has allowed the head of centre to extend links with partner schools to enable the centre to work more closely within its terms of reference. The action plan has been appropriately amended by the head of centre and the LA's project officer and is updated regularly. However, the pace at which plans are being implemented remains too slow; the centre is more generous in its view of the progress made than inspectors. Although well-intentioned, the head of centre has not provided the strategic direction for managers to tackle the key areas for improvement with sufficient rigour. All staff are committed and open to new ideas, but a cohesive team has not been built to take responsibility for school improvement. Robust systems for monitoring and evaluation are not established, for example in the monitoring of teaching and the consistent use of assessment to inform planning. Support continues to be provided by the LA, but there is not enough focus on the decisive actions required to bring about necessary change. Subject leaders have benefited from weekly meetings with the head of centre but do not have a clear view of the priorities for improvement or how to measure the impact of actions taken to raise standards. The management committee continues to be supportive in its role and is better informed by the centre following the introduction of a new reporting system. Meetings have been formalised and it has access to a wider range of services to support its role.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- Address weaknesses in leadership, management and governance - inadequate progress

External support

The head of centre continues to receive a significant level of support from the LA, particularly in the regular review of the action plan. Staff have valued the support from consultants, which has consolidated the progress made in improving pupils' behaviour and supported strategies to increase attendance. They have appreciated the training to improve the quality of teaching and some have a greater awareness

of the characteristics of good teaching. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this training.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures - inadequate

Progress since the last monitoring inspection - inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Establish a whole-school assessment system for all subjects which enables the achievement of individual pupils to be tracked effectively
- Use the data to plan lessons that closely match pupils' abilities and enables them to understand how to improve their learning
- The head of centre to provide a clear and focused direction to enable all staff to work together to accelerate progress on areas for improvement

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management committee and the Director of Children's Services for Salford.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey
H M Inspector