

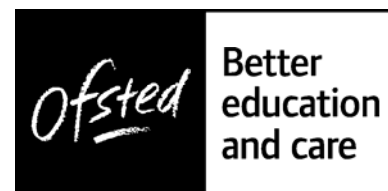
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Mrs S Bradley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Bradley

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF DERBY CITY PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with an Additional Inspector to your pupil referral unit (PRU) 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

### **Evidence**

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

### **Context**

A new management structure has been adopted which includes a new post of deputy headteacher responsible for Key Stages 3 and 2. The first attempt to make an appointment failed to attract a suitable candidate. The post will be re-advertised shortly. The posts of teaching and learning coach and information and technology

(ICT) co-ordinator will be advertised internally this month. An art teacher has resigned and the post is currently vacant. The number of pupils enrolled at the PRU has fallen from 222 in July 2004 to 165.

### **Achievement and standards**

The pupils' attainment in end-of-key stage tests, public examinations and certification was reported on after the last monitoring visit. The PRU's current targets for those pupils in Year 11 indicate that attainment will have significantly improved in 2006. The PRU believes that less than nine per cent will leave without accreditation, compared to over a quarter of pupils last year. Additionally, the proportions of the pupils attaining GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics, four or more GCSEs and grade C or better passes are anticipated to rise. The PRU expects the majority of pupils in Year 9 and Year 6 to be entered for end-of-key-stage test but very few to attain the levels expected for their age. The PRU anticipates that almost all pupils will have progressed by at least one level between Years 7 and 9.

The PRU is beginning to establish challenging targets for pupil attainment. Given the history of many pupils, which includes significant periods of absence and poor attitudes to education, these targets recognise that prior attainment alone is often not a sufficiently demanding benchmark. The PRU plans to monitor the achievement of pupils on a termly basis. However, it does not yet have evidence that the pupils are making sufficient progress to meet their targets.

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

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

### **Personal development and well-being**

Across the PRU sites, pupils are generally well behaved and have reasonable attitudes to learning. They value staff who show concern and interest in them and this results in a relaxed and co-operative working atmosphere. They enjoy most lessons and are willing to engage in lively debate about issues. The quality of pupils' participation depends very much on how effectively lessons challenge them and occasionally they lose interest and make minimal efforts. Even in these situations pupils' behaviour rarely deteriorates.

Overall, the number of exclusions continues to fall as serious incidents have reduced and the fewer pupils are involved. Impressively, the incidence of exclusions amongst the group of pupils at Key Stage 3 who were previously on part-time timetables, but are now attending the unit full time, has declined.

To date the overall rate of attendance shows a slight decline from 71 per cent, reported in November 2005, to 69 per cent in February 2006. The highest attendance at 87 per cent is in Key Stage 2 and it is at its lowest at 65 per cent in Key Stage 4.

### **Quality of provision**

The overall quality of teaching remains satisfactory. The PRU is actively engaged in strengthening teaching and lessons are generally clearly structured with learning objectives, starter activities, consolidation exercises and the opportunity at the end to reflect on what has been tackled. This helps give a firm structure to classroom activities and pupils respond well. However, despite having the ingredients of good teaching in lesson plans, the impact on learning is often limited. This is because lesson activities do not always challenge pupils and they are not linked sufficiently to what pupils need to learn. Given the high proportion of adults to learners in most lessons, planning and teaching are not sufficiently rigorous in meeting the varying individual needs of pupils. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is not always an effective element in planning learning.

Where lessons are most effective, teachers have established good relationships and a personal rapport with pupils. In these cases pupils enjoy listening and responding to the teacher and this improves their quality of learning. Teachers state clearly what it is they want pupils to learn and share this with them at the outset. As a result, pupils can see the point of their work and are thus prepared to make an effort. Where pupils are being prepared for tests and examinations in Key Stages 3 and 4 the regular reminders by teachers of the marks and levels they achieve, or what they need to do to improve, is an incentive for them to make good progress.

The proportion of pupils receiving their entitlement to a full time taught week has risen to two thirds. The proportion of pupils on long term placements at the PRU has declined by 10 per cent to 42 per cent since the last monitoring visit. Both figures are indicative of the PRU's hard work to provide pupils with a worthwhile education and its commitment to re-integrate pupils in mainstream education. However, the proportion of pupils receiving a full time taught week is not yet adequate.

For the most part the PRU provides an appropriate range of curriculum to match the pupils' needs. However, the picture is mixed, particularly at Key Stage 4 where there are many small units offering very varied ways of meeting pupils' needs. While good provision is often found across the Key Stage 4 units, the quality, overall, is too uneven in terms of well planned work and activities, the range of learning opportunities open to every pupil and the amount of time given to teaching pupils. The current organisation of the PRU around ten bases, together with a wide range of additional organisations contributing to provision, militates against providing a consistently adequate or better education.

Learning opportunities in Key Stage 2 are good, not only as a result of the consistency achieved from being located on one site, but also because of the effective solutions which meet the wide range of pupils needs. Pupils' learning difficulties are recognised at an early stage and effective strategies are developed to meet these. For a few pupils who are autistic, approaches have been developed that ensure they access learning opportunities successfully. Pupils have individual education plans and time is appropriately planned each day for them to work towards achieving their targets.

Pupils are generally supported well, especially through the secure relationships they have with staff. Pupils following courses in Key Stage 3 and 4 are given helpful advice on how to improve their standards. However, other than in Key Stage 2, the use made of individual targets to support pupils' progress is too limited.

### 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**

The LA has established a good context for the PRU to operate within its broader behaviour support service. Clear and ambitious plans are in hand to improve provision including a new Key Stage 4 base from September 2006. This will accommodate the teaching of core subjects, such as English and mathematics, for excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion. As a result, the Derwent centre will close and the number of other bases currently used by the PRU will reduce over time. These developments will be supported by the improved strategies to provide personalised learning programmes for disaffected pupils across the City of Derby. A new site for Key Stage 3 pupils is planned for completion in September 2007. Developments at Key Stage 2 will improve provision for pupils with educational and behavioural difficulties. However, in the meantime pupils are taught in some unsuitable locations and more pupils are enrolled at the PRU than it can adequately accommodate and are consequently on part-time timetables.

The monitoring of provision across the PRU is evolving and has been strengthened by the work of the deputy headteacher who was appointed in September 2005. However, the headteacher is clear that more work needs to be done to hold senior and middle managers accountable for the performance of individual subjects and bases. At present there continues to be too much variability. A schedule helpfully identifies how key aspects of the PRU's work will be monitored and evaluated. The outcomes of the monitoring so far undertaken are helping to support individual teachers and set higher expectations.

The management committee is guided by a clear understanding of the PRU's purpose. It effectively monitors the work of the PRU and has made significant contributions to the staffing restructuring, the revision of policies and plans to improve accommodation. It wisely plans for individual members of the management committee to have designated areas of responsibility, for example, to monitor improvements in the amount of taught time provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

### 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** – good progress

### **External support**

The LA has continued to provide good strategic direction for the PRU within its overall behaviour support programme. The LA has allocated significant resources to reduce the number of permanent exclusions across the City which have resulted in only 16 cases of secondary school age pupils being excluded so far this year, compared to 50 for the equivalent time two years ago. However, the number of permanent exclusions of primary school age pupils has not declined in the last twelve months and one pupil currently attending the PRU has not been re-admitted to mainstream education, despite approaches to four schools. The LA has further appropriate plans to improve the reintegration of pupils into mainstream schools and reduce the number of exclusions, especially at Key Stages 2 and 4.

The LA has targeted its support for teaching and learning on Key Stage 4 and specific subjects such as English, maths and science. This work has been better tailored to the needs of the PRU.

Unfortunately the associate headteacher who is a mentor for the headteacher has been ill. Her valued guidance and support have been missed.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that the quality of provision across the bases, and from partner organisations, appropriately meets the needs of individual pupils
- Increase the proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 who receive a full-time education
- Better tailor the planning and delivery of lessons to meet the individual needs of pupils
- Evaluate the emerging data on the progress of pupils to ensure that they fulfil their potential

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**

***Cambridge Education is a regional inspection services provider working in partnership with Ofsted***