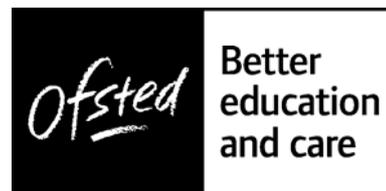


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Mrs R Chapman
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25 May 2006

Dear Mrs Chapman

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NORTH CORNWALL EOOS CENTRE

Introduction

Following my visit to your Centre on 17 and 18 May 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 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 the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

I observed five lessons, scrutinised documents, held discussions with pupils, and met the manager, acting deputy manager, teachers, representatives from the local authority and a member of the management committee.

Context

Since the inspection in November, there has been little change in staffing, apart from a new Centre manager who took up her post in April 2006. Previously, this post was filled by an acting manager who was able to fulfil his duties only part time. The roll has increased from 33 to 46 pupils, although 17 are in Year 11 and are about to leave.

Achievement and standards

Overall, the achievement of pupils is unsatisfactory. In the five full lessons observed, achievement was satisfactory in three and inadequate in two. In a brief visit to one further lesson, the limited evidence gathered suggested achievement was satisfactory. Pupils settle to their work quickly in lessons and generally complete set tasks successfully. Some of these pupils have quite complex emotional and behavioural needs and developing regular patterns of working is an achievement for them. Pupils feel they are making progress and recognise the work of the Centre in supporting them. Almost all pupils in Key Stage 2 attend mainstream school part time, which shows they are learning to manage their behaviour.

The number of pupils taking examinations is low. This academic year, 10 pupils are taking a total of 19 GCSE examinations in English language, English literature, mathematics, biology, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education (RE) and art. However, another seven pupils are not entered for any accredited examination. The Centre is currently exploring additional courses more appropriate for the different abilities of pupils.

A good system to record and measure pupils' progress has been introduced recently. It also enables staff to identify pupils who are underachieving and need additional help. The data is relatively recent and not yet able to show progress over time.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the achievements of pupils and the system to record their progress – limited.

Personal development and well-being

At the time of the inspection pupils' personal development and well-being were judged to be satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were also satisfactory. Pupils were polite and pleased to talk about their work to visitors. Improved behaviour at the Centre is shown by a fall in the number of pupils being excluded last term, whilst the number of pupils on roll has increased. Pupils have good relations with staff and many enjoy attending the Centre. However, a significant number on roll do not attend regularly. A computerised system for recording attendance has been introduced. Initial data suggest pupils' attendance has improved slightly. The figure for authorised absence is extremely high, in excess of 20%. Staff at the Centre report that some absence is authorised by parents without good reason. Data are currently being analysed to identify particular groups who have a high absence rate. Although conclusions still have to be reached, the information provides a good basis for monitoring and setting targets for improvement.

Pupils develop their self-esteem when they visit an outdoor pursuits centre to engage in climbing, canoeing or archery. They also learn to take responsibility at the local rural studies centre where they earn 'trustee' awards. However, opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the Centre itself are limited. More pupils now take part in physical exercise than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils understand the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and several eat fruit which is made available by the Centre. Some smoke outside the building at break time. The health risks of this behaviour need to be tackled more prominently in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the attendance of pupils and the ways this is checked – satisfactory.

Quality of provision

In three lessons seen teaching was satisfactory and in two it was inadequate. Teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach is satisfactory. Teachers praise and encourage pupils and generally are successful in helping them to concentrate. Planning sets out what pupils are expected to learn in the lesson, although this is not yet sufficiently detailed and underpinned by rigorous assessment. Consequently, work is not always matched closely to pupils' next steps in learning and pupils become frustrated. Additionally, the review at the end of the lesson, which allows pupils time to reflect on what they have learned, is usually too brief. Teachers and teaching assistants do not always have sufficient time to plan together and establish their respective contributions to the lesson.

All staff treat pupils with respect and establish a non-confrontational atmosphere in the Centre. However, the management of behaviour is not consistent. In two of the lessons seen this led to pupils challenging rules and disrupting the flow of these sessions.

The unsatisfactory accommodation and facilities limit the quality of teaching and learning. This was particularly evident in practical subjects such as science, when a teacher struggled to conduct a simple experiment because suitable equipment was absent.

The curriculum has been extended since the time of the last inspection. Pupils now take part in a programme of physical education at a local sports centre and make weekly visits to an outdoor pursuits centre. The curriculum at Key Stage 2 includes history, geography, RE, and PSHE. This is a positive step, although planning extends only to the end of the current year. Provision for music, design technology and aspects of science is lacking for all pupils. Many pupils, including those with a statement of special educational needs (SEN), are still not offered the full-time curriculum to which they are entitled. The

Centre is currently providing for pupils across three key stages and for those who have a wide variety of needs. This presents a considerable challenge.

Staff provide a caring environment and have positive relationships with the pupils. All staff have had initial training in child protection procedures and further courses are planned. A reward system has been introduced to support pupils' effort, attendance and behaviour and many pupils value this. The guidance offered to pupils about how they might improve their learning is underdeveloped. Most are unaware of their level of work and what they need to do to improve. The Centre works closely with other agencies to prepare pupils for their next stage.

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

- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that there is more emphasis on planning lessons that will enable pupils to learn and make good progress – limited
- improve the quality of the curriculum, particularly for pupils with statements of special educational needs, by offering a much wider range of experiences – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The management committee has been strengthened and now meets regularly. A new Centre manager has been appointed and arrangements are in place to provide for a permanent deputy manager. Relocation in more appropriate accommodation is being considered by the local authority and an alternative site has been identified. The management committee is beginning to monitor the work of the Centre, although this role is not yet fully developed.

The Centre manager has been in post only since April 2006. She has set out realistic and practical plans to take the Centre forward. She has established weekly staff meetings which are helping to develop agreed procedures. In the period prior to her appointment, change was slow. Systems to monitor and improve teaching were not established quickly enough following the inspection in November 2005.

Clear direction has only recently been established. The capacity of the Centre to improve is developing, but is not yet secure.

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

- establish a permanent, effective senior management team and management committee, ensuring that the performance of all staff is monitored regularly – limited.

External support

There have been visits from the local authority's literacy and numeracy advisers and the inspector for SEN. A manager from another Centre took responsibility for the Centre during the spring term, albeit on a part-time basis. There has been support for improving the membership and role of the management committee. The local authority has provided information and advice on identifying alternative accommodation. An external consultant has begun working with the new manager to provide support for leadership and management.

The direct impact of support on the quality of teaching and learning has been limited. The lack of a full-time Centre manager has undoubtedly hindered the pace of change. However, there has been a lack of detailed advice on the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to improve learning. The most significant impact has been on improving systems for monitoring attendance. The Centre's management committee has now drawn up its own action plan which is supported by the Centre manager's outline of weekly tasks to be completed.

The authority's statement of action includes areas for improvement with named personnel responsible for action. Dealing with the major issue of accommodation is rightly identified as a priority. The timescale is not always appropriate, with much of the planned action scheduled to take place between January and April 2006, or described as 'ongoing'. There is no target date for the expected removal from special measures. Implementation of the plan has been hampered by the absence of a permanent Centre manager.

Main Judgements

The Centre has made inadequate progress since being subject to special measures. In the term following the inspection, the pace of change was too slow. Since the arrival of the new manager in April there has been an improved sense of purpose and a clearer focus on developments which have a direct effect on teaching and learning. The full effect of this change has yet to be realised.

Quality of LA's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- the quality of teaching through the better use of assessment to inform planning and the establishment of agreed approaches to managing behaviour

- the monitoring of teaching and learning and provision of support for improvement
- the quality of the curriculum to ensure it is well matched to the needs of pupils
- completion of plans to improve the accommodation.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
H M Inspector