



18 October 2006

Ms D Horlock  
Head of Centre  
The New Broadwalk Pupil Referral Unit  
Belvedere Road  
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Dear Ms Horlock

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

### Introduction

Following my visit with Roger Hartley HMI and Karen Ling Additional Inspector to your centre on 17 and 18 October 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring visit 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 the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons, scrutinised documents and met with you, your senior management team, members of the school council, head of the inclusion service and a representative from the local authority.

### Context

On both days of the monitoring visit one of the teaching groups was off site for part of the day on curriculum enrichment activities. At the time of this visit there were 17 pupils registered full time at the unit and two on short-term placements.

## Achievement and standards

Twenty Year 9 pupils took the national tests for 14-year-olds in summer 2006. Sixteen scored Level 4 and above in mathematics; 12 scored Level 4 and above in science and 9 did so in English. Eight pupils gained Level 5 and above in one or more subjects, one gaining Level 6 in science and five in both mathematics and English. Pupils' performance in English is the weakest of the three subjects, although as the unit's own improving data now show, the picture is not straightforward. Of the 17 pupils currently registered, seven have reading ages below 12 and are engaged in the Toe by Toe remedial reading programme and the rest have reading ages around their chronological ages. All but one of the pupils on this programme are making good, and in some cases very good, progress. Writing remains the weakest aspect of pupils' English skills overall, even for those with satisfactory reading skills.

As a result of improvements in the provision for English and mathematics the progress that pupils make in lessons is now at least satisfactory and is getting better over time. Improved planning means that the work set for pupils is better matched to their needs and, as a result, the pupils' response is now positive. On this visit, individual pupils themselves were able to explain to inspectors what they had learned that was new; for example, in a mathematics lesson on area and perimeter one girl explained that she had covered the topic before in other settings but this time had understood it. In general though, pupils' knowledge of where they are up to in different aspects of their work – where they could be and what they have to do to get there – is still weak.

Good progress was made by pupils in a lesson in personal, social and health education looking at the losses incurred when an individual is sent to prison, part of a series of lessons on crime and punishment. Pupils engaged fully with the discussion, giving careful thought and consideration to the impact of loss of liberty.

Pupils are making good progress in developing a range of practical skills such as cooking and metalwork. In one lesson, pupils prepared fresh meat and vegetables and made pastry to produce tasty meat and potato pies. In their 'Gears Plus' off-site enrichment activity another group, within the space of two hours, produced a range of high quality models using cutting, welding, and filing skills.

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils say they enjoy coming to the unit because they receive good individual support. There has been a marked improvement in attendance, behaviour

and attitudes towards learning since the last inspection because of teachers' raised expectations and a more consistent approach.

Pupils are well behaved and generally show care and consideration in and around the building. They are engaged, show interest in activities, volunteer information and respond willingly to questions when asked. Pupils who demonstrate inappropriate behaviour receive good support, which has a considerable effect on behaviour throughout the day. The now well embedded reward system has a positive impact on behaviour in social contexts as well as during lessons.

The unit's continued focus on pupils' personal development contributes significantly to their learning. The pupils' self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities are developing well because they are able to contribute their own ideas and are rewarded for their efforts on a daily basis. For example, one pupil explained to others a mathematical process using the interactive whiteboard. The curriculum provision, which includes projects such as Gears Plus and off-site visits to the theatre, has a positive effect on both their learning and their attitudes to the unit. They keep focused on what they have been asked to do and make efforts to complete set work.

Pupils are provided with sound opportunities to prepare for their future economic well-being, for example discussing the consequences of their actions and the impact on their life, including discussing what time spent in prison would be like. Their increasingly positive contribution to school life, through the school council, is helping them to better understand their growing responsibilities as young citizens.

Pupils' attendance continues to rise. The challenging target for October of 80%, set in June when it was only 72%, has been exceeded so that attendance is now averaging 85%. This is very commendable and reflects the hard work and innovative ideas of staff, coupled with rigorous monitoring of absence and, importantly, its causes. For example, records show that only two pupils failed to improve their attendance rate since September to the present and, overall, attendance has risen in three of the four registration groups during the same period. Much of the success is due to a range of popular rewards for sustained attendance – for example, free breakfast sandwiches for an unbroken week of punctuality – while sanctions are sufficiently daunting to deter persistent absenteeism. However, the innovative minibus scheme, set up with support from the local authority's inclusion service, has proved to be the major spur to raising pupils' attendance. Each morning two minibuses operate routes within the unit's wide catchment area and transport pupils directly to the unit, in contrast to previous arrangements when pupils used public transport and had to make their way on foot through a local shopping precinct.

## Judgement

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 – good progress
- improve pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour and personal development – good progress.

## Quality of provision

Recent improvements in the schemes of work for English and mathematics, and in medium-term and short-term planning, have had a significant impact on the overall quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

The quality of teaching is now satisfactory overall. It was good in four of the lessons observed, satisfactory in seven; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. These levels represent an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last monitoring inspection and this is a direct result of the improvements in planning and schemes of work.

Lesson plans are now reasonably detailed, and learning objectives are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson and, in the better examples, at the end also to check with pupils how much has been achieved.

In the better lessons, the work was presented in an enthusiastic and challenging way, it contained plenty of practical tasks, and good relationships were encouraged. A particularly important feature was the way adults created a calm learning environment in which the pupils could concentrate on their work, especially when tasks were presented in different ways. For example, a teacher used her subject knowledge well to suggest different ways of calculating the perimeter of shapes. On such occasions the pace of learning was brisk and pupils' sense of achievement was high. In the most successful lessons, the work was matched well to meet the learning needs of the pupils. However, on occasions the work set was pitched too low, or insufficient explanation was given so that pupils were unclear about what to do.

A considerable amount of professional development in English and mathematics has taken place since the last monitoring visit, and this has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching. Despite this, weaknesses persist in the skill of teachers and support staff to assess accurately the levels of understanding and knowledge that the pupils display throughout their lessons. Opportunities are missed to pursue in depth through discussion with pupils the extent of their understanding and to tackle immediately any misconceptions or misunderstandings and thus move them on quickly. The rate at which pupils fill in the gaps in their knowledge needs

to increase further. This is the next major priority for the unit and will require further enhancements of teachers' subject and pedagogic knowledge.

Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. They know the pupils well and support teachers effectively, especially when a pupil shows signs of disaffection. However, a significant improvement in behaviour since the last monitoring inspection means that it is now rare for pupils to disrupt lessons.

The unit recently appointed a special needs coordinator with significant reading recovery experience, who is already pursuing individual reading programmes with some pupils, and a family liaison officer to develop links with pupils, families and other agencies.

## Judgement

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

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

## Leadership and management

Since the last monitoring visit the head of centre has taken a stronger role in leading the unit's continued development. The local authority officers, whilst continuing to provide effective support and challenge, have stepped back to allow the head of centre to play a more significant role. She has done this effectively, for example by ensuring that agreed new planning formats and schemes of work have been implemented as quickly as possible. She has established regular meetings with subject coordinators to pursue priorities raised from the previous visit and has further developed links with the wider schools community to ensure that the unit's pupils remain part of that wider agenda.

Subject coordinators now work much more closely together as a result of producing the common format for planning and schemes of work. They know that their next priority is to strengthen teachers' expertise in assessing the level of pupils' work and understanding in order to provide even more sharply focused lessons that allow the pupils to increase their rate of progress.

There is now a much stronger sense of urgency and recognition that time is of the essence with this pupil population, and an increasing belief on the part of the staff that they have the ability to sustain further improvements.

## Judgement

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

- address weaknesses in leadership and management and governance – satisfactory progress.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

## Priorities for further improvement

The unit has made a good start on the three further issues identified in the previous monitoring visit but recognises that it needs to do more work on developing teachers' subject knowledge and their skills in assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington  
H M Inspector