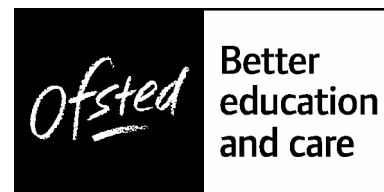


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22 January 2007

Mr Wayne Marshall
Managing Headteacher
The Base PRU
Galley Hill Education Centre
Stony Stratford
Milton Keynes
MK11 1PA

Dear Mr Marshall

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and governors and representatives from the Local Authority (LA) gave when I inspected your school on 15 January 2007. I appreciated the systematic way that you collected and presented the information to me.

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.

As a result of the inspection in May 2006 the school was asked to:

- clarify roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers so that staff are fully supported
- develop systems of self-evaluation and monitoring, and strengthen improvement planning
- improve the system for collecting information about pupils' prior attainment from mainstream schools, and the systems for assessing academic progress and matching work to pupils' individual needs
- clarify the role and purpose of the unit, including the placement of pupils.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the PRU is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement. This has been brought about as a result of the LA's decision to bring the PRU

under the management of the headteacher of Romansfield school for primary aged pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, prior to its relocation there in April 2007. The managing headteacher has instigated a range of improvements to the leadership, management and educational practices of the PRU. Nevertheless, the support given by the LA since the school was given a Notice to Improve last May has been inadequate. This is partly due to a Statement of Action that was created without consultation with the PRU's senior managers, therefore the action is not always appropriate or relevant. In addition, the management committee has not met since June 2006, and the LA's action towards the PRU's improvement has been too slow, although the pace has improved considerably since November 2006.

Progress towards the first key issue has been satisfactory and good support has been given by the LA's school improvement service. The headteacher of Romansfield school is managing and improving The Base very effectively. Staff and pupils appreciate the improvements and new arrangements and the behaviour of pupils has improved considerably as a result. Those present during the inspection were delightful, relaxed and hard-working. The staff feel very well supported and are looking forward to the benefits of relocating although they are concerned that the final arrangements have not yet been confirmed. Nevertheless, positive liaison and joint working has already begun.

The PRU has made satisfactory progress towards the second key area for development. Teaching is monitored both informally and formally, and performance management has been re-instated. The standards attained by pupils are noted, and tracking of progress to show improvement has begun. Systematic self-evaluation has not yet been put into place, although the compact nature of the PRU means that this is informally practised all the time. The school improvement plan has been re-formulated and is much improved, although, understandably, it does not yet reflect the new proposals for The Base.

The PRU has made good progress towards the third issue for improvement and all areas have been effectively addressed. Many of the improvements are recent, however, and will need further refinement once they have been in place for a while. Pupils are now not admitted unless the appropriate information from the referring schools is received. This information is combined with the PRU's and other professionals' assessments, and pupils' own views of what they need. This allows for a base-line of pupils' skills to be quickly established and for suitable work to be set that meets each pupil's needs. Academic targets are now included in individual education plans. The new systems mean that pupils' progress can be effectively tracked and particular weaknesses identified and supported.

The main problems remaining relate to the fourth issue for improvement where progress has been inadequate. The role and purpose of The Base has not yet been set within a clear authority-wide strategy for providing for pupils

with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Whilst positive developments for The Base have begun, many have not yet been finalised. The way in which The Base will integrate and liaise with other services has not yet been firmly established and the position of permanently excluded pupils is still under discussion. A protocol for admissions to and exits from The Base has been effectively established, but changes to the referral routes and placement procedures have not yet been finalised. The governing body of Romansfield school is positive about the prospect of their school's widening remit, but understandably wants the development to be set on a proper, contracted basis. The constitution of a new management committee is yet to be decided. Most of these arrangements are now underway, but have taken too long to get to this point.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth
Additional Inspector