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9 May 2007

Mrs Susan Simpson
Acting Head of Centre
Fordway Centre
Stanwell Road
Ashford
TW15 3DU

Dear Mrs Simpson

Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your pupil referral unit (PRU) on 1 May 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the head of alternative education from the local authority and to your attached consultant who found time to meet me and discuss progress to date.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on September 2006, the pupil referral unit was asked to:

- ensure that the improvement areas identified in the local authority's Additional Support and Intervention Programme (ASIP) are successfully carried out and the management committee fulfils its monitoring and strategic role
- ensure there are systematic processes in place for monitoring the quality of education and subsequent improvements
- ensure that the performance management of all staff is clearly linked to pupils' targets and achievement
- ensure that assessment and pupil-tracking systems give a clear picture of pupils' progress and that pupils are told what they need to do to improve.

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 and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The acting head of centre, having now been in post for a little over two terms, is providing the PRU with clear direction in addressing the four key issues noted in the last inspection report. The building blocks for further progress are now in place. She is very well supported in her endeavours by the acting deputy head of centre and by the PRU's attached consultant and the head of alternative education from the local authority.

The points for improvement in the ASIP plan are being addressed systematically and the regular reviews indicate an appropriate and positive response to improving the quality of education for pupils at the centre. Sensibly, the reports provided by the head of centre for the ASIP meetings are used to also provide the PRU's management committee with information, so that it can fulfil its strategic role in monitoring progress. The management committee has appointed a local primary school headteacher as chair, since the last inspection, and she and her deputy have provided very good leadership of the committee. Minutes of the meetings are clear and help to ensure that this group is now beginning to fulfil its proper strategic monitoring role.

In the past insufficient attention was paid to monitoring the quality of education. This is being addressed; lessons are regularly observed by the acting head of centre, who has undertaken an appropriate number of formal observations and also frequently visits classrooms informally. Joint lesson observations have also been helpfully undertaken with the attached consultant, ensuring accuracy of judgements and good professional development. A prompt start to the day is in place and pupils are met and greeted by all staff as they arrive, they place personal belongings in a secure place and the register taken efficiently. This ensures a smooth and orderly transition at the start of the day.

Performance management is now on a more secure footing. The performance management of the acting head of centre has been carried out in line with national expectations. Similarly, the performance management of the acting deputy and two of the teachers has also been completed. The next step is to ensure that the teaching assistants have the opportunity to discuss their progress formally and for appropriate targets to be set. This process is now much clearer than at the time of the last inspection and targets set for the senior staff are rigorous and capable of being monitored, whilst being appropriately linked to pupils' targets and achievement.

Effective systems are now in place to assess pupils at the beginning of each term, and to record and track their progress term on term. They are properly assessed on entry and exit to the PRU, providing a clear base line from which progress can be accurately judged. The expected targets for individual pupils are now also comprehensible and those pupils who make insufficient progress in literacy, numeracy and behaviour can be identified for further support.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jenny Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector