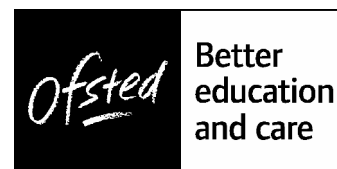


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01 December 2006

Mrs R Kelly
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Dear Mrs Kelly

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with Declan McCarthy Additional Inspector, on 13 and 14 November 2006. This was to look at aspects of Complementary Education – a PRU service comprising six centres for Key Stage 4 pupils located across Northamptonshire. Please thank the staff for their contributions to our visit.

As outlined in my initial conversation, the visit had a focus on the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes and in particular on how well the students achieve.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of 10 parts of lessons in six centres.

On the basis of what we observed during this inspection the effectiveness of the service's overall contribution to the five ECM outcomes was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

- Most children make exceptional academic progress as they move through the units to reach satisfactory standards. They make rapid gains in a short space of time.
- The number of passes in GCSE for each pupil ranges from 1 – 7 in 2006 with just under a half of pupils getting five or more passes.

- This has been a similar pattern year on year, for the past four years. Some take these examinations early in Year 10.
- In 2006, 20% gained 5 GCSEs grades A* - C and 98% gained 5 GCSEs grades A* - G.
- The best grades are achieved in art, history and religious education.
- At the end of Year 11, most students go on to further education, training or appropriate employment.
- Vocational courses and qualifications are increasing but the thrust of the PRU has been towards academic success; it is only recently that greater attention has been given to pupils' vocational needs and successes.

Personal development and well-being

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Except for the centres where there are school age mothers, these are not as good as the pupils' academic achievement.
- There is nurturing of pupils through social times and through the very strong relationships staff have with pupils. Staff clearly value pupils' achievements, celebrate these well and raise pupils' self-esteem as a result.
- Behaviour management motivates students because of the praise and rewards. However, there are still some inconsistencies in behaviour management and some staff allow pupils to manipulate situations which staff get drawn into. Students mostly respond positively to the clear expectations and boundaries set but these are sometimes applied inconsistently.
- Students enjoy coming to school and this is shown by their significantly improved attendance. They particularly enjoy physical education, expressive arts and information and communication technology.
- The PRU has now developed a forum for the student voice and considers the views of its pupils in its work and development.

Quality of provision (teaching and learning, curriculum and care, guidance and support)

- The atmosphere created in each centre is very positive, welcomes pupils and makes the centres an enjoyable place to be and to learn.
- Each centre is well maintained with most having excellent specialist subject facilities and resources. Pupils clearly respect their environment and there is no damage or graffiti.
- The specialist teaching is of good quality overall and the expertise of staff, who each work across two centres, enables pupils to do well.
- All staff have high expectations of learning; their expectations of behaviour are more variable. They use a 'small steps' approach to help pupils with plenty of reassurance and regular feedback. This succeeds in increasing students' confidence levels. Relationships between adults and pupils are particularly strong and encouraging.

- Assessment is a strength. Regular recording and tracking is in place of pupils' learning and progress and the views of pupils and parents are taken into account fully when planning activities.
- There is a well thought out and developed academic curriculum with a growing vocational programme across the centres.
- There is a clear strength in the good personal support provided for pupils and excellent way each day is reviewed. This is used effectively to identify what staff and pupils have achieved and what could be done better. This information is used effectively the next day to support pupils and make contact with any agencies who could also support, especially where there are social, emotional and mental health issues.
- There are consistent academic opportunities across the units.
- Enrichment activities during social time and outside lessons such as art and music and visits abroad are used well to broaden the curriculum and create interest and motivation.

Leadership and management

- There is a strong ethos created in each PRU. The emphasis on, and the valuing of, pupils' achievements significantly increases their self-esteem.
- The headteacher's vision is clear and there is good recognition that the curriculum needs to broaden to encompass more vocational opportunities.
- Very strong team work among the senior team means that a close eye is kept on development and that the headteacher's clear guidance and planning for development is implemented.
- There is good day to day management overall by centre coordinators ensuring that each centre runs smoothly, although at times there is not enough oversight of pupil management to ensure consistency across centres.
- The headteacher is well supported by a strong team of staff who are committed to pupils' achievements.
- The management committee oversees and manages the work of the PRU but not enough is done to challenge the centres to identify the impact of what they have achieved and how to monitor progress.
- The local authority (LA) is highly committed to providing very effective support in order to facilitate good outcomes for all children and young people referred to the service.
- A large number of pupils with statements are excluded from secondary schools. The PRU is required by the LA to cater for these pupils. It does this by providing a package of support where pupils are educated in a variety of settings, mostly offsite. This often means that the requirements of pupils' statements are not actually met. The headteacher finds the situation difficult to resolve and has been trying to reach an agreement about this with the LA for some time.

Inclusion

- The centre is successfully inclusive in terms of community and college placements; a few pupils, usually school age mothers, return to mainstream school in Key Stage 4. The PRU's role and mission is to prepare pupils for the next stage of their lives and to ensure educational success. It does this particularly well. Nearly all go to colleges or find work after they leave school. The latter is often as a result of successful work experience. Work is being done to transfer pupils earlier to mainstream education, although for pupils referred in Year 10 this is difficult for the centres to achieve.
- This is supported by good multi-agency work. There are good links with health professionals for supporting teenage mothers and a school nurse supports health learning aspects well. Links with CAMHS are sound. Work with the Connexions service has improved; the pupil survey revealed that 50% found no benefit initially. With increased liaison the picture has now improved. Other links such as with the Youth Offending Team, Wellingborough prison and the Police are also strong.
- Very good partnerships exist with parents. Consequently, their understanding of their children's needs and how to manage them is increased.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included the following points.

- Improve further pupils' attitudes and behaviour (including challenging pupils appropriately about their actions) so that these are as good as their academic achievements.
- Extend the vocational opportunities pupils have.
- Ensure that those pupils with statements have their needs met in line with the requirements of the statements; this has been an ongoing issue for many years and is still not resolved.
- Ensure the management committee monitors and evaluates the impact of the service with increased rigour.

We hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop Complementary Education.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Thanks again for your help and support throughout the visit.

Yours sincerely

George Derby
Additional Inspector