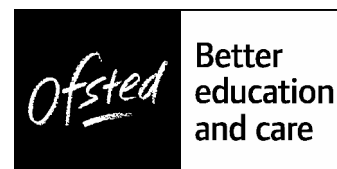


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02 January 2007

Ms C Owen
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Dear Ms Owen

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 November 2006 to look at aspects of The New Leaf Centre. Please thank both the staff and students for their contributions to our visit.

As outlined in my initial e-mailed letter, 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 lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

- Most students have low levels of attainment on entry to the PRU. However, high standards are set for students to achieve and the PRU aims for each student to gain at least one recognised qualification during their stay. This has been achieved through the effective support it gives to its alternative training providers to deliver relevant courses and qualifications.
- Many students progress on to further education, training and employment
- Students are supported well in continuing with their GCSE course work and a few students gain grades which exceed expectations.

- Students make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills across curriculum activities.

Personal development and well-being

- Students' safety is given a high priority. Child protection issues are implemented successfully and the PRU ensures through very effective links with its alternative providers that statutory requirements are adhered to. Staff training is arranged for staff from both the PRU and alternative providers.
- There is an extensive range of policies and procedures in relation to bullying and issues relating to equal opportunities and diversity. Students feel safe and prosper in the security of the caring learning environment.
- Healthy lifestyles are successfully promoted through curriculum activities such as food technology and the sport and leisure activities on offer. The centre has a breakfast club which is well attended.
- Students are involved in evaluating the quality of provision and support they receive which is mostly positive.
- Students' attendance improves as a result of the implementation of strategies which involve careful monitoring and additional support being deployed successfully.
- Students learn to behave appropriately assisted by an effective reward system which involves students in setting their own targets to enable them to take responsibility for their own actions and progress.

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

- Students benefit from the excellent range of individual programmes arranged matched to individual needs. These provide a diverse range of activities and courses to enable students to re-engage in learning. These include work experience and vocational programmes through alternative providers.
- Support for students is outstanding. Project workers, learning mentors and personal tutors provide a comprehensive support system for vulnerable students. Support packages are devised on entry and may include support from external support agencies dependent on student need. The PRU also provides a very effective service to schools it works in partnership with. Staff and students are supported within schools to prevent permanent exclusions.
- Transition arrangements for students involve Connexions and personal tutors who oversee the students' progression post 16.
- External support agencies are available and arranged according to individual student needs.

Leadership and management

- The PRU has a clear vision based on a framework of partnership with schools, support agencies, community groups and alternative training providers. Through successful partnership working the PRU is able to provide programmes and support matched to the needs of students who are at risk or who have been permanently excluded from mainstream educational provision.
- The combined leadership provided by Education Walsall and the Alternative Curriculum Manager at the New Leaf Centre is outstanding. This has provided a clear direction based on raising the profile of PRU provision locally and the successful development of very effective partnership working. The centre has worked extremely hard at carrying out improvements since the last inspection and has made much progress.
- Quality assurance across the provision is very good and is being developed further. Managers are working hard to improve the analysis of attendance data, to demonstrate outcomes effectively. There is further work to be done in linking the outcome of strategies, such as the effectiveness of the reward system, on attendance.
- Links with alternative providers and procedures which support these, are very good and have resulted in most students remaining in education and training in Year 11.
- The lesson observations conducted by senior managers are good and have a clear focus on how well students engage in learning. Useful comments are given to teachers and instructors to enable them to improve the quality of lessons and activities.

Inclusion

- The PRU is highly inclusive in relation to matching programmes to individual students' needs.
- The PRU has high expectations of its students and sets targets for all students to achieve appropriate qualifications despite prior low attainment.
- The quality of relationships and secure, caring environment helps every student to grow in confidence. This is supported by exemplary support packages which enables students to achieve well by unlocking their potential.
- There is very good communication with parents. Consequently their understanding is increased enabling them to support their children more effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the need for robust information and criteria to base judgements about how successful the PRU is in relation to the achievement of ECM outcomes

- the further development of quality assurance procedures to include an evaluation of the quality of training delivered by alternative providers.

We hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the New Leaf Centre.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to Education Walsall 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

Kath Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector