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21 January 2008

Mrs B Gonella  
The Headteacher  
The Coningsby Centre PRU  
45 Coombe Road  
Croydon  
CR0 1BQ

Dear Mrs Gonella

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your PRU on 15 January 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the staff, the students, the chair of the advisory committee and the local authority representatives.

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 2007, the PRU was asked to

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it enables all learners to make better progress, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Undertake regular formal lesson observation in order to improve the quality of teaching, bringing it up to the standard of the best.
- Improve attendance.
- Ensure that the advisory committee provides sufficient and well targeted support and challenge for the headteacher.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the PRU is, overall, making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Improving the quality of teaching is the area where least progress has been made and the progress here is inadequate. As a result of carefully targeted support from the deputy headteacher and LA consultants, the quality of science teaching is improving. It is important that this support continues as planned for this term. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching by the regular members of staff has improved, with more teaching judged to be good. However, attempts to improve the quality of teaching of English and mathematics are significantly impeded by a lack of permanent teaching staff. The appointments made last term proved to be unsuitable

and these teachers are no longer working at the PRU. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are teaching the Year 11 students in preparation for GCSE examinations. This arrangement cannot be sustained in the long term, not least because this is taking up too much of the headteacher's time. There were ten different supply staff teaching English and mathematics to Years 9 and 10 during the autumn term, most of whom were considered to be unsuitable. The reliance on supply staff is an issue which needs to be addressed urgently before the next inspection to ensure that students make the progress of which they are capable. Students are frustrated by the lack of continuity from one lesson to the next and an over reliance on worksheets. For some this has led to a deterioration in their behaviour and there were too many periods of temporary exclusion last term.

In spite of recruitment difficulties staff remain focused on helping students to achieve GCSE qualifications. They are to be commended for maintaining an appropriate range of subjects for examination. In 2007, all ten, full time students in Year 11 took between four and eight GCSE examinations. With the exception of geography, students achieved passes in all subjects. Four out of ten students achieved higher passes in citizenship but in other subjects, although they achieved as predicted, they did not achieve as well as they should. Nevertheless, all students went on to college or employment. The provision and attainment for the part time students at the Get Connected site and those receiving home tuition was not a focus for this visit. The last inspection did not raise issues in respect of the progress made by these groups of students.

The headteacher, together with local authority officers, has completed the first round of lesson observations as identified in the action plan. This constitutes satisfactory progress in establishing regular, formal monitoring of the quality of teaching. There is now a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in lessons and the components required to ensure good teaching. Where inadequate teaching was found, appropriate action has been taken. The second scrutiny of students' books is about to take place. Staff meetings are focused on areas identified for improvement including marking and assessment. There is currently no formal monitoring of temporary staff, or the quality of provision at the Get Connected centre, and this needs to be addressed before the next inspection. The headteacher is working with the new teacher-in-charge of the Get Connected centre to establish a monitoring programme.

Satisfactory progress has been made in improving attendance. As a result of more thorough tracking of individual students, the PRU can demonstrate a 13% increase in attendance since the last inspection. During the autumn term the average attendance rate was 78%. Incentives to attend more regularly are popular and effective with most students. This improvement needs to be maintained so that regular attendance can make a difference to the students' progress. The monitoring of attendance is being appropriately linked with the tracking of students' behaviour and attainment. This is helping senior staff to analyse progress across a range of academic and personal factors, as well as targeting resources to best support individual students.

The advisory committee has made satisfactory progress in providing sufficient and well targeted support and challenge for the headteacher. The chair is new to the role

and to the committee. She has a proactive approach to finding out what needs to be done and is gaining a clearer understanding of the work and needs of the PRU and its staff, as well as how other members of the committee can play their part more fully. The headteacher is very appreciative of this improved involvement and support and this now needs to translate into a greater level of challenge and professional debate. For example, the action plan needs to be revised so that the success criteria and monitoring procedures more effectively support self-evaluation. The plan would also benefit from being more closely aligned with those of the local authority.

The local authority has provided the school with satisfactory support and challenge. Two meetings of the School Specific Monitoring Group have taken place and the support given to improve attendance and the teaching of science is beginning to have an impact. Recruitment difficulties at the PRU have meant that planned support for the teaching of English and mathematics is not yet in place. The advisory committee would benefit from further guidance to develop the full range of roles and responsibilities as they move towards the new requirements for a management committee.

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

Yours sincerely,

Heather Yaxley  
Her Majesty's Inspector