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18 December 2008

Mrs Gillian Williams
Headteacher
The ARC– Havering KS4 PRU
Century Youth House
Albert Road
Romford
RM1 2PS

Dear Mrs Williams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The ARC – Havering KS4 PRU

Following my visit to your school on 10 December 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the pupil referral unit became subject to special measures in December 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management committee and the Director of Education for Havering.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of The ARC – Havering KS4 PRU

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 10 December 2008

Evidence

The Inspector observed the work of the pupil referral unit (PRU); scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of the management group and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed who took up post in September 2008. Several new permanent members of staff have also been appointed, bringing the PRU up to its full staffing complement. Although all aspects of the PRU's provision were considered at this visit, particular focus was given to achievement and standards and to teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

The PRU has continued to refine its systems to monitor students' achievements. These are based on a good range of assessments when students enter the PRU and regular tracking and monitoring of their progress on a half-termly basis. The rigorous and challenging targets which are now set in all subjects provide an effective management tool and give teachers a sound basis against which the progress of individuals can be judged. Good training has been given to staff about how to use these targets but, as yet, practice is not sufficiently consistent and systematic to drive up achievement. In June 2008, the number of students entered for GCSE examinations and nationally recognised vocational qualifications increased significantly compared to 2007. The standards students attained in these examinations were somewhat below those expected nationally, but represent satisfactory achievement and progress for all students, given their starting points. Standards are lower than expected because all students have missed substantial periods of their education. At this visit, the students observed are making satisfactory progress and are on track to achieve their targets.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve students' achievement by setting them challenging targets and monitoring their progress – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

The improvements in behaviour noted at the last visit have been maintained, due in part to the rewards system which is highly valued by students. Attendance is now rigorously monitored and the overall attendance rate has improved since the last visit. For example, the number of students with an attendance rate better than 80%

has increased significantly. This represents considerable improvement for these students compared to their attendance rate in their previous schools. The PRU's links with the educational welfare service have been further strengthened and this is having a positive impact on helping students to try to re-engage in education. The use of Welfare Call and other strategies is helping to improve overall attendance rates, but there is still some way to go before attendance is satisfactory for all students. The local authority has overhauled its admission procedures so that all students now receive full-time tuition. The criteria for admission are now clear, and further attention is being given to the relationship between the management group and the admissions panel to ensure that these criteria are adhered to rigorously and consistently.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve students' attendance and monitor it more closely – satisfactory

Quality of provision

The PRU's systems to monitor classroom practice have been further strengthened by the appointment of the new deputy headteacher. They give a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses and have enabled the PRU to implement good systems to support teachers, particularly those who are new, in developing their practice. Along with stability in staffing, this has led to significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. All inadequate teaching has now been eliminated. Teachers plan their lessons conscientiously, with a more careful match of activities to students' needs and aspirations. They have good subject knowledge, which is much appreciated by students. However, the practice of giving students clear guidance about what they need to do to improve is not consistently enough linked to students' targets to be fully effective. The improvements in staffing have enabled the PRU to monitor the quality of the work done by external providers more effectively. There is now a good balance of academic, vocational and work-related opportunities. The care, guidance and support offered to students have also improved owing to permanent teaching staff now leading the pastoral care systems. An important feature of this is the way staff help to raise students' self-esteem and confidence through one-to-one support. The local authority has developed, and is beginning to implement, short- and long-term plans to improve the accommodation, and is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the PRU having to share accommodation with the Youth Service. However, as yet, the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are not matched by improvements in the accommodation to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- provide full-time education for all students by providing adequate staffing, resources and accommodation to meet their needs – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The appointment of the new deputy headteacher has been very beneficial in giving the headteacher the support she needs to implement her clear view about how the PRU should develop. The monitoring and evaluation systems which have been put in place give the headteacher and her deputy a realistic view of the PRU's strengths and weaknesses. The management group now meets regularly and is beginning to come to terms with its roles and responsibilities. However, it is still very dependent on the information given by the local authority and the PRU and is not fully effective as the PRU's critical friend. Since the last visit, the local authority has acted to bring about greater clarity about the management of the building. Procedures to safeguard students now meet government requirements.

The present targets to evaluate the work of the PRU have been helpful in its development to date and the PRU has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and since the last visit. It has recognised that, to demonstrate a secure track record of improvement, it must use its information about students' performance with more precision.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- establish clear procedures for the admission of students – satisfactory
- ensure that procedures for safeguarding students meet government requirements – satisfactory
- establish clear targets against which to evaluate the work of the PRU – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has amended its action plan and this now provides a sound context within which the PRU can move forward. Effective support has been given to develop the quality of teaching and learning and to address issues related to safeguarding. It has plans to address the accommodation issues and support the management group to act as an effective critical friend by setting more challenging targets against which to evaluate the PRU's performance. Timely implementation of these will give the PRU the confidence to increase the pace of improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Refine the targets against which to evaluate the work of the PRU so that they provide a more precise tool to judge its effectiveness.
- Improve students' achievement by using the challenging targets which have been set consistently in all lessons.
- Improve students' attendance.