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18 November 2008

Mrs V Fisher  
Cresswell Support Centre  
Cuttholme Road  
Chesterfield  
Derbyshire  
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Dear Mrs Fisher

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your pupil referral unit (PRU) on 5 November, for the time you gave to our 'phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to those students and representatives of the local authority and the management committee with whom I had helpful discussions.

The PRU has experienced challenging circumstances since it was last inspected. These include three changes of leadership, instances of long-term staff illness and 22 days of closure which were the result of several break-ins, insufficient staff to run the centre and health and safety concerns. The local authority (LA) designated the centre as a school causing concern in June 2008.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 14 November 2007, the school was asked to

- Improve procedures for assessment to better inform teachers' planning and self-evaluation
- Improve self-evaluation of the centre's work.
- In collaboration with the local authority:
  - Effect the planned move to new premises
  - Establish an active management committee that fully meets the requirements of new regulations.

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

Despite the considerable difficulties, staff have demonstrated a strong commitment to the centre. They have rightly focused on stabilising students' behaviour and maintaining the quality of teaching and learning. The centre continues to provide a

calm learning environment, where students feel secure. They say that they are learning more here than they did at their previous schools because their behaviour is better. They particularly value the centre's rewards system, which motivates them well. Although standards on entry are well below average for most students and they remain so by the end of Year 9, inspection evidence suggests that they make sufficient progress in their time at the centre. Progress is good in science. Last year more than half of the students made a gain of one National Curriculum level in this subject.

The LA support team, in conjunction with the management committee, has taken suitable action to stabilise staffing at the centre. The secondment of an acting headteacher has accelerated the rate of improvement. She provides clear direction for staff as well as giving them time for development work. There is now a suitable improvement plan, linked to outcomes for students, that is being implemented effectively. Staff know students well and plan suitable work for them. Students are involved effectively in their learning. Teaching ensures that they know what they are learning about and reviews during lessons give students a sense of their own learning and progress. Baseline assessments in reading, writing, comprehension and science have been in place for some time. In the few weeks that the headteacher has been in post, staff have introduced procedures for baseline and ongoing assessment that are being adopted across all subjects. In time this will provide the basis on which student's progress can be measured and evaluated. Students' individual assessment files have been started and will include samples of levelled work as supporting evidence.

A system for accurately evaluating students' attendance is being developed, by refining the procedures already in place. Analysis of the percentages of personal targets that students' achieve has commenced to give a picture for the centre each month. There are suitable plans to encourage greater student involvement in evaluating their behaviour and setting targets for themselves.

The move to refurbished premises, delayed by unforeseen circumstances, has now been approved for the end of term. The management committee carries out its work in line with the existing regulations. The LA support team (LAST) have provided timely assistance that has strengthened the centre's capacity to improve. The LAST monitors the progress of the improvement plan and reports directly to the management committee.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge  
Additional Inspector