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Ms SueTysall  
The Head of Centre  
Caradon PRU  
West Street  
Liskeard  
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Dear Ms Tysall

## Fresh Start: monitoring inspection of Caradon PRU Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 5 and 6 February 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school opened in September 2007.

## Evidence

During the visit HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the head of centre, deputy head of centre, chair of the management committee, teachers and students. Discussions by telephone also took place with the local authority link inspector and head of the PRU service.

## Context

Caradon PRU opened as a Fresh Start school in September 2007 and is accommodated in an adapted former infant school. It provides places for students aged between 11 and 16 years who are not attending mainstream school. The roll has fallen since the last visit, in part due to the large number of Year 11 students who left in July 2008 and, as a consequence of, some other students returning successfully to mainstream school. Currently 16 students are on roll, three of whom have a statement of special educational need for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Almost all students are of White British heritage. Many come from homes experiencing economic hardship and challenging circumstances. Since the last visit, two new teachers have joined the school to teach design and technology (DT) and English. New modifications to the building have extended facilities for teaching information and communication technology (ICT) and created a specialist room for teaching science. The PRU is part of the Caradon Behaviour Partnership Programme



which includes five secondary and 44 primary schools. During the visit a relatively small number of students were observed in the PRU due to timetabled activities at other locations and some travel difficulties due to the inclement weather.

### Achievement and standards

Standards vary with almost all students working below expected levels. Whilst Year 11 students gained a range of GCSE and Entry level examination passes in 2008, grades achieved were generally low in relation to students' starting points. In part this was due to students' history of underachievement. Recent evidence suggests students are making better progress. Almost all Year 11 students are expected to gain a range of GCSE or Entry level passes and vocational qualifications at the end of the current academic year. Expectations are higher and more realistic because the PRU has established better information about students' progress and is now using this to set more challenging targets. Several students have a low level of literacy and the PRU has introduced a range of strategies which are beginning to raise standards.

### Personal development and well-being

Students' attendance shows a marked improvement since joining the PRU when compared with attendance at their previous school. A small number of persistent absentees remain and the PRU takes appropriate action to follow up non-attendance.

Clear systems for managing students' behaviour are in place and detailed records of incidents of misbehaviour are both kept and followed up. Letters are sent home to recognise achievement which students appreciate. The success of this system is reflected in the sharp reduction in exclusions since the unit opened and the respect students show for the premises. Whilst some students feel the centre monitors their behaviour too closely, they accept that the PRU has helped them to settle to work and to complete their examination courses. Students are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles through the provision of healthy meals, the successfully enforced smoking ban, and relevant topics in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.

Students eat together at lunchtime which promotes their social skills. However, opportunities for students to exercise independence and take responsibility are limited. Good practice was observed in a DT lesson where a student took responsibility for the tools, handled them responsibly, and stored them away at the end of the activity. However, independent working is often limited by the high staff ratio and established practice of students receiving immediate support whenever they encounter a problem. This is particularly evident in lessons where adults sit in close proximity to students and sometimes assist with tasks the students could manage themselves. Opportunities for students to develop independence were identified as an area for improvement by the last monitoring inspection. It is still an issue since it affects students' preparation for future work where a higher level of independence will be expected.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in June 2008:

- increase opportunities for students to develop their independence – inadequate progress.

### Quality of provision

Good relationships between staff and students underpin a positive climate for learning in lessons. Teachers give praise and encouragement which help students to stay on task. Subject knowledge has been strengthened which is reflected in the wider range of courses on offer. The PRU is also steadily building up resources to meet the needs of students who often experience difficulty engaging with learning. Assessment information is not yet used consistently to inform teachers' planning. Consequently, in some lessons this leads to students asking questions too often because the task is not pitched at the right level to allow independent work.

The curriculum has been broadened at Key Stage 4 by providing additional accredited courses in DT, food technology, child development, citizenship and media studies. This is a positive step since students have more opportunities to succeed and gain recognition. Further development is needed in some subjects to ensure higher attaining students have their needs met appropriately by completing GCSE as well as Entry level courses. Schemes of work are in place for almost all subjects. Whilst there are no Key Stage 3 students currently attending, further planning in some subjects is needed in preparation for admitting students from this age group. Alternative placements have been found for students who had a statement of special educational need for complex behavioural difficulties. Students in Key Stage 4 who have a statement of special educational need are offered an appropriate range of curriculum opportunities.

The PRU has introduced a programme to improve students' social and emotional development which is having a positive effect. Students discuss their individual learning and behaviour targets with a mentor and consider strategies to improve their social skills. The PRU has appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding students. Currently there is no site manager in post and some aspects of health and safety related to the school premises are not always followed up quickly.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in June 2008:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so a greater proportion is good or outstanding – satisfactory
- extend the range of examination courses at Key Stage 4 – good
- ensure provision is appropriate for students who have a statement of special educational need – good.

## Leadership and management

The head of centre and deputy head of centre continue to provide purposeful leadership. The environment is attractive, welcoming and conducive to learning, enhanced by attractive displays of students' artwork.

A good range of data has been collected on the PRU's performance which is analysed carefully. This underpins the PRU's accurate self-evaluation. Plans for development are regularly reviewed and demonstrate strong improvement in several areas. Resources have been increased to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in English, science and ICT. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place regularly and senior leaders are aware of areas for improvement. For example, further training is needed for some staff and not all teachers are appropriately qualified for their role. The improvements to date, particularly in the curriculum and students' behaviour and attendance, are a positive feature.

The management committee holds regular and well attended meetings. Reports from the head of centre are detailed and informative. Representation from partner schools has created a common understanding of the needs of students. Students on shared placements generally receive sufficient education, although occasionally placements break down and it can take time to find alternative provision.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in June 2008:

- work with partner schools to ensure that students on shared placements receive sufficient education – satisfactory.

## External support

The local authority continues to provide a good level of support, including visits from the School Improvement Partner and head of the PRU service. Subject advisers have been particularly effective in supporting developments in the teaching of numeracy and literacy. The PRU has established strong relationships with its partner schools which have assisted joint planning and the return of some students back to mainstream education.

## Main Judgements

The school's overall progress is satisfactory.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Increase opportunities for students to develop their independence.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so a greater proportion is good or outstanding.
- Ensure all teachers are suitably qualified for their role.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the Director of Children's Services for Cornwall and the Secretary of State. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath  
Her Majesty's Inspector