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2 April 2009

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 26 March 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school 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.

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 third monitoring inspection on 26 March 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the work of the pupil referral unit (PRU); scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, groups of students, the chair of governors and representatives from the local authority. At this visit, particular attention was given to standards and achievement, teaching and learning, attendance, accommodation and the processes for student referral to the PRU.

Context

There have been no significant staff changes since the previous visit. The number of students on roll at the Centre is close to its capacity and discussions have been held between the management group and the local authority on the use of the building, ways of improving the learning environment and a revision of the referral procedures. Decisions on some of these issues have not been finalised.

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. However, the effectiveness of these systems has been hampered by problems in getting detailed information from students' previous schools and accurate information about the support available for individuals from other agencies. These issues have been discussed with the local authority by the headteacher and management group and changes to the referral system have been agreed and implemented. Their effectiveness will be reviewed at the next visit. The Centre has rigorous and robust systems in place to set challenging targets for students in all subjects. These are used well as a management tool and give teachers a sound basis against which the progress of individuals can be judged. Good training has been given to staff on how to use these targets and they are beginning to be used systematically. This is having a positive impact on driving up standards. Teacher assessments, and in some cases externally moderated course work, indicate that the majority of students are on track to attain qualifications that will enable them to continue their education or move into employment.

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

Students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning continue to improve. Compared to their performance in their previous schools, this represents a great change for the better for the majority of students. In general, the Centre is successful in re-engaging students in education. However, there are still too many students who do not see the benefit of regular attendance or appreciate what the PRU can offer them. Several of these students are from families who condone their negative attitude. There is good support from the educational welfare officer and the number of persistent non-attenders has been reduced. However, the overall attendance rate is still not good enough and the management group has requested further support from the local authority to address this issue. A number of students and staff indicated that the slow pace of improvement in the accommodation has a negative effect on the Centre's attempts to promote good attendance. There is a direct link between instances of poor behaviour and attendance. The behaviour of those who attend regularly is now mainly good. Effective use by staff of the Centre's behaviour policy is ensuring that instances of poor behaviour are managed well and are not allowed to affect the learning of others in the class. There is now an effective programme of personal, social and health education and, through this, most students are aware of what is expected of them in managing their own behaviour. In classrooms, there is a purposeful learning environment. However, the protocols for the use of the building by others have not fully come into effect, with the result that the learning environment for some subjects, particularly English and physical education, is impoverished because there are, for example, no permanent displays of students' work or of key vocabulary. Consequently, the Centre's efforts to motivate its students and develop their self-esteem, in order to improve attendance, are not well supported.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

Quality of provision

The stability in staffing, which was noted at the last visit, has led to further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The number of lessons judged to be good and better continues to increase. Teachers' planning is now more focused on matching activities to students' abilities and aspirations. However, there are still a number of lessons where planning focuses on the delivery of content rather than on students' needs and how to address them. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is much appreciated by students. At the last visit, an issue relating to matching improvements in the quality of teaching with improvements in the accommodation was identified. There is still some way to go before this is resolved. The improvements in staffing have enabled the Centre to provide a good balance of academic, vocational and work-related opportunities. The improvements seen at the last visit in the care, guidance and support offered to students have been sustained. An important feature of this is that the stability in

staffing has enabled effective one-to-one support to be provided for all students. This has a positive effect on raising their self-esteem and confidence.

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 headteacher continues to give a clear lead to the work of the Centre and she is well supported by her deputy headteacher. The monitoring and evaluation systems which have been put in place are proving to be rigorous and robust and give a realistic view of the Centre's strengths and weaknesses. The management group is now meeting regularly and has made good progress in coming to terms with its roles and responsibilities. However, the issues regarding dual use of the building have not been resolved and there are strong indications that the Centre will have to continue in its present accommodation for the foreseeable future. There are plans to establish protocols relating to the dual use of the building which will address the staff's concerns about having facilities outside the teaching day in order to prepare resources and plan their lessons. These plans have not yet been implemented, which is undermining staff morale. Further discussions are planned in order to finalise the targets against which the work of the PRU can be measured. The issue relating to procedures for safeguarding students was resolved prior to the last visit.

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 – good
- establish clear targets against which to evaluate the work of the PRU – satisfactory

External support

Previous visits identified issues regarding improvements in the quality of the accommodation and its dual use by the Youth Service. These matters have not been resolved. This is adversely affecting the Centre's rate of progress. Although the support overall is satisfactory, there are areas where the decisions need to be taken urgently to ensure that the pace of improvement does not slacken.

Priorities for further improvement

- Resolve the issues relating to dual use of the building.
- Ensure that the revised referral arrangements operate effectively.