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7 May 2009

Ms Sue Wright
Education Centre Manager
The Bridge Education Centre
Cherbourg Road
Eastleigh
SO50 5EL

Dear Ms Wright

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Bridge Education Centre

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 April 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2008. 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

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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of The Bridge Education Centre

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 April 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, teachers and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The centre continues to operate out of three sites and offers provision for groups of students with different needs. Established Key Stage 4 students attend the Woodside site. On the Eastleigh site, newcomers are assessed and lessons are provided for permanently excluded Key Stage 2 and 3 students and for emotionally vulnerable young people. In addition, intervention programmes are offered for part-time students who attend while still on roll at mainstream schools. These two sites are both temporary accommodation. Work has begun on building a permanent base for The Bridge Education Centre and it is hoped that this will be functional by summer 2010.

There is also a hospital unit. Inspectors did not visit the hospital unit on this occasion as previous visits have confirmed that the quality of education it provides is good. The hospital site is currently being managed by the local authority.

For the remainder of the centre, the senior leadership team has been restructured to allow an assistant centre manager to lead each of the different sites and to each take on important operational and strategic roles.

Achievement and standards

Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons. Although they do not all readily engage with their learning, teachers work hard to motivate and interest them and most pupils respond well to this. The best teachers have high expectations of students.

Many students start at the centre after major periods of turbulence in their lives and often have not attended school much for some time. They have significant gaps in their learning and are not as good as expected for their age at reading, writing and arithmetic. However, at the centre, they are beginning to catch up and some students are attaining very well.

Increasingly, older students are completing course work and preparing satisfactorily for exams. The centre's data indicate that most Year 11 students are on course to achieve at least 3 A* to G grades at GCSE and several should achieve 3 A* to C GCSE grades in addition to accreditation for other courses such as Level 1 Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and Award Scheme Development and

Accreditation Network (ASDAN). These predictions indicate that standards are below average but that students are making satisfactory progress at the centre. Virtually all students are making much better progress than they did over the previous key stage.

Personal development and well-being

The behaviour of students around the centre and in lessons continues to be good. Students are helped to manage their own behaviour and to support each other. There is a strong focus on learning and progress within the unit and students expect to work while they are there. The centre helps students recognise the importance of success in their learning and in their social development and this is reflected in the efforts made by students while attending. The relationships between staff and students are good. Students are well informed about health issues. On the Woodside site, in particular, students are well prepared for their entry to the world of work. The attendance of some students continues to be a concern, but the work of the centre in focusing on this has led to improvements generally.

Quality of provision

The teaching at the two sites visited is satisfactory, but there is some good and outstanding practice. Teachers are now setting challenging academic targets and tracking students' progress towards these. In English, curriculum targets are also set and clear feedback given to help students achieve them. Students are being encouraged to assess their own work and to identify strengths and areas they need to work on. However, this element of assessment is not yet sufficiently developed. Some teachers are lively and enthusiastic in their lessons. They challenge students and help them meet the challenge, asking open questions to promote thinking. Generally, however, teachers are not using assessment well to enable them to match their teaching to the particular learning needs of the individuals they are teaching. This means that some students are doing work that is too easy for them.

The curriculum is being developed but there is not yet sufficient focus on basic skills. Emotionally vulnerable students are supported well in core subjects and attend important sessions that help them develop social skills and emotional awareness. Those who are at the centre for other reasons are able to study for GCSEs in English, mathematics and science and additional courses are offered in information and communication technology, art, and personal, social and health education. There is a work-related learning package offered to students through an ASDAN course. The centre is not in a position to offer a wide range of vocational courses and leaders recognise that there are insufficient collaborative arrangements with schools in order to provide personalised packages for individuals. Study periods at the centre are being introduced to ensure that all permanently excluded students are receiving their entitlement to a full-time education.

Those students for whom it is appropriate are able to attend college courses and/or work placements. While these have been very successful for some students, the

centre manager accepts that too many students are failing to complete them successfully. Finally, those who are based permanently at the centre in Key Stage 4 can access 'Youth Options' which offers a range of sporting and other activities. Plans are in place to extend this provision to meet the needs of younger students.

Staff care for students well. They have high expectations of their behaviour, cooperation and participation and have put in place good systems to support those who have trouble meeting them. The centre has found that detailed initial assessment of students is proving very useful in enabling staff to set challenging but appropriate individual targets in relation to both behaviour and academic progress. The centre has introduced systems to enable teachers to track the academic progress made by students. While this is not yet entirely secure and does not yet consist of data gathered over a long period, it is already proving useful in identifying gaps in knowledge and impediments to progress. The centre leader understands how to make this work better in the future.

Teachers at the centre closely track the progress students make in their behaviour. They are good at giving clear feedback on this. The centre manager rightly judges that the targets set are not sufficiently specific to individual students' needs, but plans for them to become the norm as in-depth initial assessments are introduced.

The centre has employed a drama therapist and is also seeking to employ a mental health specialist, both of which posts are planned to support teachers in ensuring that troubled students are given help to manage and understand their needs.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that all pupils receive full-time education, especially by broadening the range of opportunities for work-related learning – satisfactory
- set, and consistently review, challenging targets for pupils' academic achievement, behaviour and personal development – satisfactory
- implement strategies for managing and improving pupils' behaviour that are consistently used by all staff – good.

Leadership and management

The centre manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. She is ambitious for the centre and is determined that the young people it serves will get a good deal. Good procedures are in place for monitoring progress against targets and refining plans.

Since the last visit, staff have identified a shared vision and articulated shared values. These have been translated into a practical model of what the centre will offer to schools and students. This has been shared with partnership schools and is beginning to be the basis of ensuring that intervention with young people at risk is early, proportionate and supportive of these young people returning to mainstream education as efficiently as possible.

Planning for the future and for improvement is strong and the strengthened leadership team is enabling progress to be made at a faster rate as project leadership can be shared. Increasingly, the centre is consulting with students and parents about their views on the quality of provision.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- establish clear procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the centre – good
- improve arrangements for excluded pupils to return successfully to mainstream education – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has supported The Bridge Centre to a satisfactory degree. They have taken a lead in working with school partnerships to develop a vision for how the partnerships will work with the centre to improve outcomes for pupils. Many agreements are now in place and there is a clear understanding of what remains to be done. One of the partnerships has appointed a project leader and the other is about to do so in order to facilitate this work.

The authority has supported the centre manager in monitoring and evaluating the progress made by the centre towards its action plan and has provided training for staff on a range of initiatives including assessment for learning. The impact of these is beginning to be seen in teaching and record keeping. A new School Improvement Partner supports the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further develop agreements and protocols about the ways in which the centre will work with schools in both the Eastleigh (Central) and Winchester partnerships and put these into practice; develop collaborative arrangements with schools to enable the centre to offer tailored provision for individual students.
- Improve the success rates of college and work placements so that most students who undertake a course or work placement complete it successfully.
- Improve the quality of learning of all students in the centre by increasing the proportion of good quality lessons. This will involve ensuring that teachers carefully assess what individual students know, understand and can do, giving clear feedback to students and ensuring that teaching is closely matched to individual learners' needs.