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Dr D Jones
Aylesbury Vale Support Centre
Abbey Centre
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Dear Dr Jones

Ofsted survey inspection programme: the extent and quality of provision for pupils from day 6 of an exclusion.

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Tuesday 07 October 2008 to look at your work in providing for pupils from day 6 of their permanent exclusion, supporting schools in reducing exclusion and developing shared provision for those excluded for more than 5 days.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included an interview with yourself, scrutiny of relevant documentation, phone calls to three parents and the observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of the day 6 provision was judged to be good. Very few pupils who had been permanently excluded were on site on the day of the visit. Two pupils had only recently started attending following permanent exclusion. The majority of pupils are in Key Stage 4 and follow suitable full time programmes which include on site basic and core skills education and a range of alternative provision individually tailored to meet their needs.

Achievement and standards

Pupils attending the Support Centre make good progress. At Key Stage 3, many are reintegrated to mainstream schools. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have an appropriate balance of academic and vocational courses. Attendance at the centre is generally better than previous attendance at school. Individual targets are carefully set and reviewed at the end of each lesson. In the

session observed, good progress was made in learning, behaviour was good and standards were satisfactory.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching observed was good. Resources were used well to support learning and stimulate discussion, creating a very good working atmosphere. The teacher used questioning well to elicit responses, although, towards the end of the lesson, the teacher sometimes provided insufficient thinking time before providing the answers.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. Provision is carefully tailored to meet individual needs and a good range of alternative provision is available. The development of a virtual learning environment is enabling continuity of study for those on dual placements and those who have been permanently excluded.

Leadership and management of subject/aspect

The leadership and management of the day 6 provision for permanently excluded pupils is outstanding. The Headteacher has a very clear vision of what needs to be done to improve provision and is intent on developing preventative work to minimise the need for pupils to be excluded. Pupils are assessed thoroughly on entry to the centre, and progress is tracked very well. There are hindrances, some of which are outside of the control of the centre, which mean that the provision is not yet as successful as it could be. The centre reports that there have been delays in pupils commencing provision on day 6 following permanent exclusion because of the time taken to arrange transport contracts, especially for pupils from more rural areas of the county. Accommodation at the centre is limited, and this has been recognised by the local authority as a priority for development. The Headteacher of the centre has very good working relationships with headteachers in the area and takes a lead role in brokering shared placements for those on fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days and co-ordinating managed moves. This ensures that pupils do not become lost to the system and are speedily placed in appropriate provision. However, schools which are geographically isolated are unable to develop shared arrangements and do not, therefore, have the option to use exclusions longer than 5 days.

Inclusion

Provision is very much tailored to individuals and as such the needs of pupils are generally well met. Staff know the pupils well and make them, and their parents, feel welcome. Parents interviewed were very positive about the quality of provision and the openness of staff. One parent reported that his son told him he had not worked so hard for a long time. There is a clear focus

on preventative work to avoid exclusion through an outreach programme. Of 91 pupils supported through outreach in 2007/08, only 3 were subsequently permanently excluded and 7 became dual registered with the centre. The remainder, 89%, sustained their mainstream placements.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- working with the local authority to ensure all pupils can access the provision on day 6 following permanent exclusion
- working with the authority to ensure all schools have access to day 6 provision for pupils on longer fixed term exclusions.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the day 6 provision.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Anita Wade
Her Majesty's Inspector