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15 July 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 7 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 7 July 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, a representative of the management group, and representatives from the local authority. At this visit, particular attention was given to teaching and learning, attendance, accommodation and the processes for student referral to the PRU.

Context

Since the last visit, meetings have been held between the local authority, the management group, the headteacher and senior staff from the PRU, and representatives from the Youth Service to establish protocols for the use of the building. These have been implemented and their impact is being carefully monitored. However, although a sound start has been made, it is too early to ascertain if issues related to staff morale have been resolved or for the impact on student achievement to be fully evaluated. Plans for improvements to the accommodation have been finalised and will be implemented over the summer. The recent intake of students into the present Year 10, and those who have been referred to Year 10 next year, show more extreme behaviours and attendance patterns than the present Year 11.

Achievement and standards

Since the last visit, the PRU has continued to refine its systems to monitor students' achievements. At this visit, it was clear that the effectiveness of these systems is still hampered by problems in getting detailed information from students' previous schools and accurate information about the support available for individuals from other agencies. Consequently, at this time, the PRU has to rely heavily on students turning up to induction and on its own testing to establish their academic and personal starting points. This means that, for many students, too little is known about their previous performance for the provision to be fully effective from day one, when they enter the PRU. However, staff use the systems as well as they can to set challenging targets for students' personal and academic development and as a management tool. Good training has been given to staff on how to use these targets and they are starting to use them systematically in lessons. This is having a positive impact on driving up standards. As seen at the last visit, 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. The PRU has developed a points-based system to score attainment and, based on predicted grades, it shows that the present Year 11 are performing much better than previous cohorts.

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. Attendance has improved since the last visit but is still below that expected. There is good support from the educational welfare officer and the number of persistent absentees has been further reduced. In part, this may be due to legal action taken against families who condone persistent absence. Planned improvements in the accommodation are focused on helping to raise the morale of both students and staff to enable them to take greater pride in their environment. The PRU has an effective behaviour management policy, including the use of exclusion as a last resort. However, this is not used to full effect in all lessons and, in light of the increasing need of the incoming cohorts, senior managers have, through their monitoring, identified further training as a priority. 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. However, many of the students new to the PRU are taking time to come to terms with their responsibilities. Developing their confidence and self-esteem in this area is not helped by the PRU not being able to use the learning environment to full effect, because examples of good work cannot be permanently displayed or used as a model for others to emulate.

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 has led to further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The number of lessons judged to be good and better continues to improve. 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 these will be addressed. This is particularly so in identifying how the behaviour policy will be used with those students who find self-discipline difficult. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is much appreciated by students. The improvements in staffing have enabled the centre to provide a good balance of academic, vocational and work-related opportunities, which are valued by the students. The improvements seen at the last visit in the care, guidance and support offered to students have been sustained.

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

Since the last visit, protocols for the joint use of the building have been established. However, the full effect has yet to be realised and there are still some areas of concern. For example, there is too little space for the permanent display of good work to promote the self-esteem of students and to encourage others. The referral processes have been finalised and are now working effectively. The monitoring and evaluation systems continue to prove their worth and give a realistic view of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. They have been used well to identify issues related to the more extreme behaviours and attendance patterns of new students and in developing strategies to address them. The management group is now meeting regularly and has made good progress in coming to terms with its roles and responsibilities. It is beginning to set more effective targets against which the work of the PRU can be judged. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have continued to work tirelessly to implement their vision of how the provision should develop and to embed the teamwork and ethos to achieve it.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- establish clear procedures for the admission of students – satisfactory
- establish clear targets against which to evaluate the work of the PRU – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has acted effectively on the issues raised at the last visit regarding the joint use of the building and the referral of students. These are being carefully monitored so that issues which arise, such as the space available for permanent display, can be addressed quickly. It has finalised plans for the development of aspects of the accommodation and these will be implemented over the summer. The impact of these changes on making the PRU a more effective learning environment will be a focus for the next visit.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the behaviour management policy is used effectively in all lessons.
- Continue to improve attendance.