

Tribal Education
1–4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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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 13–14 October 2009 with Paul Canham AI, 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 May 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection – inadequate.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

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
HM Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of The Bridge Education Centre

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 13–14 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the centre's work, scrutinised documents and met with the head of centre, staff, students and a representative of the local authority. On this occasion the educational provision of the hospital unit was not inspected and will not be reported upon.

Context

The centre educates students aged 9–16 whose needs, for a range of reasons, cannot be met currently by a mainstream education provider. There are three different sites. One of these is the secure hospital unit which is in permanent accommodation at the hospital. This provision is not currently being line managed by the education centre manager.

The remaining two sites are presently in temporary accommodation. At the first of these, newcomers are assessed and lessons, study support and workshops are provided for emotionally vulnerable students and those who attend on a part-time basis. On the site, lessons are provided for Key Stage 4 students who are attending the centre on a more permanent basis. The building of the new, permanent accommodation for these groups is now well underway and it is planned that the activities taking place on these latter two sites will move to the new building in the spring.

The local authority is working closely with the centre both through the school improvement partner and through their Education Inclusion Manager.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Students are making satisfactory progress in their lessons but in some, where the teaching is imaginative and dynamic, they make good progress. Generally they approach their work with a sense of purpose and want to do well. They enjoy the sense of achievement they experience when they master a concept or produce good work. In some lessons, however, teachers do too much for them and in these lessons students become passive and unwilling to contribute.

The centre's data indicate that while the attainment of students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools was below average, they made good progress in their coursework last year. However, for a variety of reasons, their examination marks did not match their coursework grades and overall grades were lower than had been expected. As a result, although lower-ability students made good progress and middle-ability students made satisfactory progress, the progress made by the more able was inadequate. The current Year 10 are making good

progress and reaching average levels of attainment in their coursework. The centre is rightly working to secure their success in examinations.

Those students who attend the centre because of their emotional vulnerability are making satisfactory progress overall. The attainment of some is exceptional.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour is generally good at the centre with little disruption evident, although on occasions students are too passive in their learning. Students are clear that they need to adopt behaviours which will help them learn. There has been a very significant reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions from the centre both in terms of the number of students and the number of days lost to learning. Most importantly, an increasing proportion of students are being successfully reintegrated into mainstream education or accessing appropriate special school places. This is becoming a strength of the centre.

Students told an inspector that they feel safe and secure. They have a sound understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are generally supportive of each other. Students are developing their moral understanding, supported by the clearly articulated expectations about behaviour at the centre. They are being given a firm grounding in literature and in film but other aspects of their cultural development are not as well supported.

Students say they attend the centre more often than when they were in mainstream school. However, their attendance both at the centre and at their college courses remains well below average. Despite the work done to remedy this, it remains an important area that requires improvement.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching still varies across the centre. Most teachers have a good understanding of how to motivate their students and work hard to do so. Many lessons are dynamic and well paced. Where questioning is good, it is incisive and well targeted at individual students' level of understanding and the learning objective of the lesson. However, some teachers are not good at using assessment during a lesson to determine which student needs to move on and which needs to revisit a concept. These teachers tend to be less good than others at giving clear feedback to students about what they need to do to improve their work. Similarly, some teachers do not use open questions to enable students to develop their own understanding and knowledge. There remains a need to ensure that all teachers incorporate teaching of basic skills such as reading, writing, spelling and numeracy in all their lessons.

Efforts have been made to broaden the range of opportunities afforded to students within the curriculum. As a result, there are now opportunities for permanently

excluded and emotionally vulnerable students to gain qualifications in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology at GCSE level. The centre has found places for and supports students to attend a wide variety of different college courses. In addition, some of these students now have opportunities to participate in vocational learning courses which will be accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) or the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE). However a high proportion of permanently excluded students are not receiving their statutory entitlement of a full-time education. This needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

Staff at the centre have always been caring of their students, but they are now well supported in this with clear analytical tools to indicate the progress individuals are making with their emotional development and behaviour. Helpful plans are made to support students and these are appropriately reviewed. Increasing flexibility in the learning packages offered to students is enabling more of them to be supported in ways which closely match their individual needs. The centre manager has a clear commitment to achieving the best for students in the long term. This involves an acceptance that this may not always mean that students should be allowed to take the easiest option. These factors are contributing to the improved rates of reintegration into mainstream education and completion of college courses.

The tracking of individual students' academic progress is becoming embedded. While there remains work to be done to ensure that internal assessment is accurate and that students are helped to understand and take responsibility for their own progress, this aspect of the centre's work is now satisfactory.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

Leadership and management

Those who work at the centre share a sense of determination to secure good provision and outcomes for students. Working in partnership with the local authority, the centre manager has achieved good progress in relation to all the identified areas for improvement except providing a full-time education to those students for whom this is an entitlement. The centre has robust plans and progress is monitored regularly and efficiently. As a result the centre manager has a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Other senior leaders are taking an

increasing role in evaluating the progress made by the centre and in planning actively for improvement.

There are now protocols and arrangements for admission to the centre and reintegration into mainstream or special schools which are followed by both areas the centre serves. The centre offers clarity about the different packages it can offer and is increasingly able to tailor support to meet the needs of individual students and, where appropriate, their mainstream school. The rate of permanent exclusions from the two school areas served by the centre has dropped considerably in the last two years. Collaborative and partnership working is now extending to other agencies as the centre is becoming increasingly proactive in ensuring shared approaches to finding solutions to their students' difficulties.

Judgement

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 students to return successfully to mainstream education – good.

External support

The local authority has supported the centre well in developing shared protocols across schools for the admission and reintegration of students. A strategic group is working well to support the centre, challenge it and hold it accountable. As a result, the authority has been able to be responsive to the needs of the centre and the advisory support given has been tightly focused and well targeted. The local authority, however, has not worked effectively with the centre to ensure that the difficulties in offering a full-time curriculum to those students who are entitled to it are overcome.

Priorities for further improvement

- ensure that all students entitled to a full-time education are accessing their entitlement
- raise levels of attendance.