

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Textphone 0161 618 8524
T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0207 421 5642
Direct F 0207 421 6746
Mark.Hogan@ofsted.gov.uk



12 January 2009

Mrs R Challoner
Whiteheath Pupil Referral Unit
Throne Road
Rowley Regis
B65 9JP

Dear Mrs. Challoner,

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Moving through the system

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4 and 5 December 2008 to look at work on developing the future economic well-being of pupils in your PRU. We also looked at how well arrangements are made to prepare pupils for leaving the PRU.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included:

- Meetings with yourself and staff
- Meeting with your Connexions personal adviser
- Observation of part of one lesson
- Meeting with pupils
- Review of documentation.

Overall, your work in developing the future economic well-being of pupils in the training centre in your PRU is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate a strongly developing self-confidence that empowers them to take the initiative and also to work constructively with others. They learn very well how to deal with change and to be creative in their thinking. They are bold enough to take well-judged risks and most are rational in their decision-making. Older pupils have a very good understanding of their career and progression options. Through their work experience and other contact with external agencies, older pupils also develop a very good understanding of the disciplines required by the workplace.

Features of effective practice:

- Pupils make excellent progress in attendance. Many pupils have either not attended school for the previous two years or more or have very low attendance rates, some at less than 30%. Attendance overall last year was 87% and one individual pupil with particular difficulties improved from 0% in her mainstream school to 50%, increasing to



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

68% since her last review. Some pupils regularly achieve 100% attendance. The particularly effective attendance procedures ensure immediate daily contact by telephone, a letter after three days and a possible visit. If non-attendance is persistent, then a review takes place with the pupil and their parent. The education welfare officer is fully involved and understanding of the individual needs of the pupils. The attendance-recording sheet is very comprehensive and enables patterns of non-attendance to be recognised. The PRU effectively uses a booklet which explores the good and bad points about 90% plus a matrix showing how much time is lost over a year if pupils either miss school or individual lessons. This is a very effective discussion tool with pupils.

- Despite pupils missing a lot of schooling prior to coming to the PRU, progressions are good. In the last five months, 12 pupils have been reintegrated into school. In 2007, 70% of year 11 leavers progressed into college or work-based learning, 13% into employment and 8.5% remained not in employment, education, or training (NEET). In 2008, 69% progressed into college or work-based learning and 23% into employment. Past pupils have moved into higher education; one is a doctor, one is a teacher and another is studying law. Individual education plans and individual pastoral plans set challenging and measurable targets and are effectively used to assess and plan progress.
- The curriculum is innovative and effective and is designed not only to lead to achievement in the national curriculum but also to encourage pupils to develop their confidence, personal and social skills. Developments have taken place to offer wider curriculum opportunities within each department. For example, in 2005/06 the mathematics department focused mainly on national curriculum mathematics. Work in 2006/07 extended to links with science, food technology, information communication technology (ICT) and personal and social education with a project on citizenship activity and the use and abuse of statistics. Activities for 2007/08 included work with the art department and looking at Islamic patterns and in 2008/09, included a cipher challenge involving ICT, history and English. Similar developments have taken place in every department. Pupils are stimulated by this approach and are motivated to learn. Teaching is good with a range of creative resources. Wednesday afternoons are for activities which widen horizons and encourage pupils to try new sports, develop new skills, meet new people and cope with the outside world in a secure and familiar setting. Pupils are encouraged to enter national competitions and many are successful. Pupils are very active in fundraising and community events and spend time looking at the groups of people they are raising money for.
- Careers education and work-related activities are good with excellent links with the Connexions personal adviser. Year 9 pupils look at their options and choose their subjects and year 10 includes group work. The main focus is on year 11 to prepare pupils for when they leave. A visit to Birmingham University, designed to raise aspirations, gave pupils an insight into the courses available and student life. This was followed by a careers event in collaboration with Connexions. Five speakers from different vocational areas, talked to pupils in small groups. This was a very practical day and even included handling the animals brought in by one of the speakers who worked with animals. The day gave the opportunity for pupils to talk to people they did not know and to try out new activities. A new life skills course is introducing a wide variety of topics relevant to economic well-being.

- Work experience is an integral part of the curriculum. The work experience programme is well organised and starts in May leading up to the work experience week in November. Good preparation and support takes place and in November 2007, 57% successfully completed the full week and 43% attended for three days. Some pupils are offered employment by the employer or an opportunity for work-based learning. Two of the work placements were for home tuition pupils and six home tuition pupils are taking part this year.
- Leadership and management are very good and staff are very enthusiastic and committed to supporting the pupils so that they can achieve their individual goals. A part-time counsellor effectively supports pupils with specific needs. Partnership working is extensive and there is excellent contact with the local schools. Staff work hard to ensure the PRU is a safe and secure environment for the pupils. The rooms and resources in the centre are well planned and the atmosphere is welcoming. Art work is displayed and photographs effectively provide a visual diary of activities and events showing pupils' achievements.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- Explore accreditation for the new life skills programme.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop economic well-being in the school.

As I explained, 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.

Yours sincerely

Jan LLoyd

Jan LLoyd
Her Majesty's Inspector