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Ms Thomas and Ms Penn  
Stratton Education Centre  
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Wiltshire  
SN2 7QP

Dear Ms Thomas and Ms Penn

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stratton Education Centre

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 February 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly Qualified Teachers may not 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 governors, the Director of Children's Services for Swindon and the inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis

Her Majesty's Inspector



## Special measures: monitoring of Stratton Education Centre Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 February 2010

### Evidence

I observed the work of the PRU, scrutinised documents and met with the school improvement partner, a representative from the local authority, the interim headteacher designate, staff and students.

Four of the eight centres which make up the provision were inspected on this visit: The Stratton Education Centre, The Riverside Centre, The Youth Education Project (YEP) and Swindon Creative Education Project (SCEP).

### Context

The substantive headteacher is on leave and the PRU is being lead by two acting headteachers. An interim headteacher has been appointed and will shortly assume responsibility for leading the PRU. Home tuition provision is now separate from the PRU and managed directly by the local authority.

### Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Students were seen to be developing appropriate attitudes to learning and making satisfactory progress. Assessment information provided by the PRU shows that most students are making at least satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points, although some students at the SCEP had made less than the expected progress in mathematics and action is being taken to address this.

### Other relevant student outcomes

The attendance of most students is better than their previous attendance at mainstream schools. Students' behaviour is mostly satisfactory and often good. Staff challenge instances of inappropriate behaviour firmly and fairly, and students respond positively to this non-confrontational approach, which encourages students to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

### The effectiveness of provision

Additional teachers have been recruited to strengthen the quality of teaching in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, and science. Teachers and other adults working in the classroom know their students well, and tasks and activities are generally well matched to students' needs and interests. Good relationships underpin the good learning that takes place in most lessons. Most



of the teaching that was seen was of good quality, and effectively motivated, engaged and challenged students.

New assessment and reporting systems have been introduced and an appropriate common format for lesson planning is being adopted. These initiatives are only recent and further time is needed for them to be fully embedded. A curriculum review is underway and some of the weaknesses in provision identified by the previous inspection have been addressed. For example, entry-level science is now being taught to Year 11 students and Year 10 students have begun to study GCSE science.

A programme of curriculum meetings has been established to enable curriculum development and the sharing of good practice. All students at YEP now have the opportunity to gain accreditation in core subjects and art, and there are plans to broaden the provision further from September.

Good use is being made of the available space but the lack of suitable accommodation at some of the centres limits the range of activities that can be offered. At the Stratton and SCEPT Centres, there is a shortage of convenient space for private conversations with parents, or anywhere for students to have respite from other students, or to work with therapists and other professionals.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve all aspects of provision at Youth Education Project to bring about improved outcomes for students that are at least satisfactory by the start of the summer term 2010 – satisfactory.
- Improve the curriculum at Stratton by:
  - providing opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 to study science
  - increasing the taught time for primary-aged pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools to the recommended level, and providing them with a broader curriculum.– satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The PRU has a range of information about students' academic and personal development. However, this data is held in a variety of places, which makes analysis of the information a time-consuming and challenging manual process. Each centre has assessment information that has been recorded on a computer spreadsheet but the lack of a single coherent management information system, which links all centres, has prevented significant progress in this area.

Those responsible for leading and managing the PRU are developing an increasingly accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development but the monitoring of



teaching and learning, although developing rapidly, is not yet sufficiently frequent or rigorous to provide leaders and managers with sufficiently detailed information about the quality of provision. Current lesson observations do not appear to give sufficient attention to outcomes for students and do not provide a clear picture of whether the areas identified for improvement in the lessons observed have later been addressed.

The management committee has been reconstituted and is now better placed to hold the PRU to account. This is a recent development and it is too early to judge its impact on improving provision by challenging and supporting the PRU.

Actions have been taken to provide an interim solution for inadequacies in the toilet facilities at SCEP and further work is planned to complete improvements at the earliest opportunity.

The head of centre at SCEP has successfully completed training as a child protection coordinator and staff at SCEP have completed relevant safeguarding training. The PRU safeguarding and child protection policy has been reviewed and revised to ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet or exceed current requirements. The local authority safeguarding adviser has monitored progress and a report has been prepared for the management committee to highlight strengths and further areas for development.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that safeguarding regulations and duties at Secondary Creative Education Project, as highlighted by the inspection team, are fully met by the end of October 2009 – satisfactory.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management of the PRU by:
  - ensuring that centre managers improve their skills at analysing and evaluating the work that goes on in their centres so that they are confident that all students are achieving to the best of their abilities
  - developing robust systems for self-evaluation which involve all staff
  - making good use of the information gathered through self-evaluation to establish a plan that reflects the PRU's vision and ambitions for improvement
  - ensuring the management committee is more effective in challenging and supporting the PRU and meets its statutory requirements – satisfactory.

## External support

The local authority recovery plan for the PRU has helpful milestones for measuring progress and a good range of actions that are clearly targeted on the areas for improvement. However, it would benefit from clearer timescales for its implementation and detail regarding how the actions taken will be monitored and



evaluated. Through the first phase of implementing the plan, the local authority has provided a good balance of support and challenge, which has had a positive impact on developing systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the PRU. Local authority advisors have worked closely with the PRU and evidence of the impact of this work can be seen in improvements to the curriculum, particularly in science and in the developments to safeguarding.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Urgently implement an effective management information system across the whole of the provision that will enable timely and efficient monitoring and evaluation of all of its work.

