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12 October 2009

Mr Gary Gwinnell-Smith, Ms Jane Smith
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Dear Mr Gwinnell-Smith and Ms Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southampton PRU The
Melbourne Centre

Following my visit with Fran Ashworth, additional inspector, to your school on 5
October 2009, 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 March 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and
the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

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 the management committee and the Executive Director for
Children's Services and Learning for Southampton City Council.

Yours sincerely

Helen Barter
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Southampton PRU The Melbourne Centre

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 5 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the two temporary headteachers, the manager of The Compass Centre and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors had conversations with students at each site.

Context

The temporary headteacher present at the March 2009 inspection continues to lead and manage the school for three days a week. The local authority has seconded an experienced senior leader for the remaining two days a week, who took up post a few days before the visit. A recruitment and selection process is underway for the permanent role of headteacher. A permanent member of staff is now in charge at The Melbourne Centre, having taken up post in September 2009, but was off sick during the monitoring inspection. There are 2.8 and 0.4 vacant teaching posts at The Melbourne Centre and The Compass Centre respectively. These teaching posts are covered by supply staff. There has been significant staff illness this term resulting in further supply cover. An experienced home-school liaison officer started in the school in September on a temporary contract. The permanent post will be advertised shortly. An educational welfare officer now works 0.5 of a week across the two centres.

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

There was some improvement in results in 2009, with more students gaining a pass in English at GCSE, although most passes were at the lower grades and no student gained higher than a grade C. Mathematics results at GCSE were similar to those in 2008, and again most passes were at the lower grades, although there was improved performance in this subject at entry level. Nevertheless, standards across the school are still too low and students' achievement remains inadequate.

At The Melbourne Centre, all students now have behaviour and attendance targets, and predicted grades or results are in place for those students in Year 11. At The Compass Centre, targets for literacy are established and used effectively in students' books to help them understand what they need to do to improve. They are less effective for numeracy. Although there are some gaps in the data, staff are now more aware of students' attainment on starting at the school. A pupil-tracking database has been introduced at The Melbourne Centre which maps most students' Key Stage 2 test results and CATs scores and the results of additional reading and



spelling tests. However, these arrangements are new and not yet in place at The Compass Centre, and the school as a whole is not yet in a position to know how well students are progressing towards their targets or whether the achievement of individuals or different groups is good enough. Too many students make inadequate progress in lessons because teachers do not have a secure understanding of their abilities or potential and consequently do not plan effectively to meet their individual needs. The continued poor attendance of some students has a serious impact on their ability to make progress in their learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise achievement by setting challenging targets for students in all years, based on accurate assessment of their attainment on entry – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students' behaviour is similar to that reported at the inspection. Although some students show challenging behaviour and attempt to disrupt lessons while others are trying to learn, the atmosphere in the school is generally calm. However, the school continues to use short-term temporary exclusions where students' behaviour compromises the health and safety of themselves and others. Most students follow the school's routines and expectations at break- and lunchtimes and relationships with staff are generally positive. Students are pleased that the school has acted on their request to have hot food at lunchtime and most enjoy the hot meals now provided.

Attendance for the school was under 50% for the last academic year and it was lower at The Compass Centre than at The Melbourne Centre. Data for the month of September show improvement at both centres, with the whole-school attendance level being around 60%. However, during the inspection visit, no lesson had more than half the expected number of students and some lessons did not take place because no students arrived. The location of centres and the long journey times required are a factor in some students' poor attendance. While attendance is still too low, there are signs of improvement as a result of the strategies put in place since the last inspection. More students are nearing or achieving their attendance targets and they are responding very positively to the new incentive system. An effective partnership is developing between the educational welfare officer and the home-school liaison officer. Together they closely monitor students' absences and focus particularly on those who are persistent absentees. The introduction of truancy calling is helping to give a clear message that unexplained absences will be followed up and students will be asked why they are not in school. New induction processes, including parenting agreements and home-school contracts, are helping parents to understand their role in supporting their children's regular attendance at school.



Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Extend the range of strategies to improve students' attendance and reduce the high number of persistent absentees – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

In the lessons observed, relationships between students and staff were generally positive and the students present mostly attended well to their tasks. Students made the best progress where teachers challenged them through questioning, engaged their enthusiasm through well-planned, practical activities and set clear expectations for their learning. However, four of the ten lessons observed were inadequate. This was mainly because teachers did not plan sufficiently well for students' individual needs, based on their knowledge of their prior learning or the targets set for them. The pace of learning was slow and students were not challenged to think for themselves and learn independently. Not enough emphasis is given to developing students' basic skills across subjects, particularly with regard to numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). ICT resourcing is good but there are missed opportunities for students to practise their skills through other areas of their work.

The school is aware that the curriculum needs constant review to ensure it meets students' needs effectively, particularly as more knowledge is gained about their prior attainment and achievement. It has already identified, for example, that poor performance in entry level science and PSHE in Year 11 in 2009 brings into question the appropriateness of these courses for students. While students receive their entitlement to taught time at The Melbourne Centre, this is not the case at The Compass Centre. The school accounts for the required 24 hours per week by including breakfast club, tutor time and lunchtime into its calculation, stating that these periods are used to teach social skills. The monitoring inspection did not visit the early sessions but found that the lunchtime sessions are not used effectively for teaching, and this alone continues to create a shortfall in the time available for learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all students have the recommended full-time provision – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The temporary headteachers are realistic about the current effectiveness of the school. They recognise that staffing difficulties and absences and the slowness in appointing a full-time headteacher have hampered the school right at the very start of its journey of improvement. Nevertheless, the temporary headteacher present at



the inspection in March has pressed ahead to review the school's provision and put procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. A start has been made in collecting performance data for the school, but the analysis of them is not yet rigorous enough to account for students' achievement and to be sure that all individuals and groups are making equal progress. The school and the local authority share the same action plan but little has been done so far to evaluate how effective actions are. Within the school, there is not enough responsibility placed on staff at all levels to account for the progress made by students in their classes or tutor groups. However, an improved ethos in the school is apparent, with students themselves recognising that it feels more like a place to learn now than it did previously.

Minutes of meetings of the management committee show that there is a good level of expertise and experience amongst its members. Intentions for the improvement of the school are sound but the lack of data about students' progress is hampering their ability to hold the school to account for improving achievement.

The inspection of March 2009 reported that students received satisfactory care, guidance and support but did not comment on the arrangements for safeguarding. This monitoring inspection found that safeguarding procedures are inadequate and statutory requirements are not met. The school does not hold a central record of all of the necessary checks on staff and others who come into contact with students. The school's own records are incomplete and the external body which holds information on the checks on behalf of the local authority is not currently able to account for the enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) checks for three members of staff. A member of staff with responsibility for child protection has been identified for both centres but they are awaiting appropriate training for their roles. Child protection training for all staff has not been refreshed for over three years nor provided for any new staff joining the school. Recent improvement has been made in ensuring detailed risk assessments are carried out for all activities and visits which are undertaken off site. However, risk assessments within the school, for example of the construction workshop and the use of tools by students, are out of date and are insufficiently rigorous to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. The school must ensure that it meets all the statutory requirements relating to safeguarding as a matter of urgency.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Strengthen the capacity to improve by appointing permanent staff in key leadership and management positions – inadequate.
- Collect and rigorously analyse data to evaluate the school's performance – inadequate.

External support



The failure to ensure that the school meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding is a significant weakness on the part of the local authority and requires urgent attention. Slow resolution of personnel issues have hampered the local authority's ability to advertise for the post of substantive headteacher but this is now in hand, with a planned start date of January 2010 for the appointee.

The senior representative from the local authority has given valuable support to the temporary headteacher since the school went into special measures, particularly during a difficult time with staffing issues. The inspector for special educational needs is now working effectively with staff to help them better understand how to set targets. The new secondment of an experienced colleague to work alongside the temporary headteacher and support the transition when a permanent headteacher is in post also demonstrates sound support from the local authority. An advisor for teaching and learning has been identified but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this support. The action plan now meets requirements and, as required by HMI, places appropriate emphasis on the school's engagement with parents and carers, as seen in the improved induction procedures for parents. The Task Group is an appropriate forum within the local authority to evaluate the progress of the school and the impact of its own support. However, as it has only met once since the school was placed in special measures, it is difficult to evaluate how effective it is in ensuring that actions are appropriate and that targets are met.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency in order to ensure that requirements for safeguarding are fully met and are in accordance with DCSF guidance '*Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education*':
 - ensure that the school holds a single central record detailing the range of checks, covering all employed staff, supply staff and others identified by the school as having regular contact with children – with immediate effect
 - provide all staff, including those with designated responsibility for child protection, with appropriate child protection training – by 31 October 2009
 - carry out health and safety risk assessments of all parts of the premises at both centres which are used by students and staff – by 31 October 2009.

