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Ms Jane Smith, Headteacher  
Mr Gary Gwinnell-Smith, Executive Headteacher  
Southampton PRU The Melbourne Centre  
18 Melbourne Street  
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SO14 5FB

Dear Ms Smith and Mr Gwinnell-Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southampton PRU The  
Melbourne Centre

Following my visit with Fran Ashworth, additional inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 December 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 second 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 vice-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 second monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 December 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and executive headteacher, the heads of the Melbourne Centre and the Compass Centre, the home-school liaison officer and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors had informal conversations with students at each site.

## Context

The headteacher was permanently appointed from 1 November 2009. The executive headteacher remains on the senior management team and will be the special educational needs coordinator for the two centres from 1 January 2010. The head of the Melbourne Centre has fully returned to work following absence through illness. The home-school liaison officer will be appointed, working three days a week at the Melbourne Centre from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010. The vacant 0.4 teaching post at the Compass Centre will be filled from January 2010. Two vacant full-time teaching posts are currently being advertised at the Melbourne Centre. The chair of the management committee resigned on 1 December 2009 and the post is currently vacant.

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

In the short time since the previous monitoring inspection, no additional test or examination results have been received. It remains difficult for the school to judge the progress being made by students because of the patchy availability of attainment on entry data, which is often missing entirely for students who have been out of education for some time. Discussions within the local authority are necessary to help local schools understand the need for the two centres to have accurate and timely information about students' prior attainment.

The progress of students observed in lessons was mixed. Students made at least satisfactory and better progress where work was well matched to their abilities and practical learning activities, such as in design technology, art and food technology, engaged their interest. However, in a significant proportion of the lessons observed, students made little or no progress because the work planned did not take enough account of their needs.

At the Melbourne Centre, students are becoming increasingly aware of their targets. Progress meetings planned for the end of this term promise a much-improved opportunity for students, with their parents or carers, to reflect with their teachers



on how well they are doing, understand the precise levels at which they are working and know what they need to do to improve to reach their predicted targets. These opportunities are not yet available to students at the Compass Centre. While STAR books are used satisfactorily by staff to record students' attitudes and behaviour in each lesson and can lead to monetary rewards which students value, they are an ineffective tool for teachers to assess students' learning and for setting them challenging targets to improve.

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

The atmosphere in both centres is generally calm. In lessons, poor behaviour is managed effectively by staff in a quiet and professional manner. There is some inappropriate behaviour in corridor areas at both centres at break and lunchtimes, although managers and other staff are usually quick to dissipate problems before they become serious incidents. While most students' are keen participants in sporting activities, not all follow healthy lifestyles and many are habitual smokers. Students were observed smoking immediately outside both centres on several occasions during the inspection.

At the Melbourne Centre, attendance is currently standing at 55% overall. Records clearly show that attendance is directly related to what is on offer to the students, such as a reward week which resulted in a marked increase. However, the steadily improving attendance level for Year 10 students over the past five weeks shows that they are beginning to respond positively to the improving provision on offer. Conversely, Year 11 students are responding negatively to the high expectations that they will attend lessons in all subjects and will not be allowed to opt out as they choose. These expectations have resulted in a decline in their attendance levels but the school is rightly persisting and working with the students effectively to help them understand the importance of their last year of schooling. Through a new format for lesson-planning, teachers are now expected to account for students not present in lessons. The educational welfare office and home-school liaison officer work in effective partnership and are further developing electronic systems to monitor attendance and to impress upon students and their parents and carers the importance of regular attendance. Individual cases clearly document that some students' attendance has been significantly improved during their time at the Melbourne Centre.

Attendance at the Compass Centre is currently at 65% overall, although permanently excluded pupils do not attend as well as those who are on the nine-week programme prior to reintegration. The head of centre, supported by the educational



welfare officer, applies monitoring strategies satisfactorily but there is not enough rigour in their application to help improve attendance to satisfactory levels.

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

While there are some well-taught lessons in both centres, and an outstanding physical education lesson was observed at the Melbourne Centre, there is still too much teaching that is inadequate, which is preventing students from making the progress they should. Teachers do not consistently ensure that assessments of the levels at which students are working consistently play a full part in shaping lessons so that objectives are matched closely to students' individual needs. Teachers do not plan lessons effectively, often only describing the activities to be undertaken with little consideration of how these will be expected to promote students' learning or evaluation of how successful activities were in improving students' progress. A training day to introduce a new whole-school lesson plan format and to reinforce the basic standards of teaching and learning, including the effective use of teaching assistants to support learning, took place the day before the monitoring inspection. There are clear expectations from the headteacher that teachers will use the new planning format to identify clear objectives for all students, to evaluate their learning in the lesson and to identify the next steps towards their targets. This will need to be monitored rigorously and frequently by the headteacher and by both centre managers to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning improves.

Very recent changes at the Melbourne Centre has resulted in a curriculum which is now well balanced across the different subjects, promotes students' personal development well and prepares them effectively for continuing courses at college or for future work. Students are not yet accustomed to this new curriculum which does not give them their former freedom to opt out of subjects they do not want to learn, particularly English, mathematics and science. The headteacher recognises that there is more to do to develop teaching of these subjects in a more practical way which engages students' interest and promotes their basic skills across all of their learning.

The curriculum at the Compass Centre remains inadequate. It does not meet the needs of students, particularly those who are excluded from full-time education. The breakfast club promotes students' social and personal skills satisfactorily but few gain from this as many do not turn up at the expected time. Further valuable teaching time is lost as students move to tutor groups where they continue with similar activities or play card games. Lunchtime sessions continue to be an ineffective use of the time which is designated for teaching. The headteacher and



local authority are aware that a significant review of curriculum provision at the Compass Centre must take place as a matter of urgency if the centre is to be deemed to be making satisfactory educational provision for all groups of students who attend.

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 appointment of a permanent headteacher, with the continued valuable support of the executive headteacher, has given much-needed stability to the leadership and management of the school. In a short time the headteacher has gained an insightful grasp of the issues and is beginning to have an impact, for example in the recently improved curriculum at the Melbourne Centre. At the same time, she has necessarily focused her immediate efforts on introducing and improving systems to ensure students' health, safety and welfare. Statutory requirements for the safeguarding of students are now met. Suitable action plans are in place to remedy remaining health and safety issues relating to the upkeep of the premises at both centres.

The headteacher knows that there is still much to do to raise the standard of education to an acceptable level and does not underestimate the significant challenges ahead. The imminent introduction of a whole-school electronic system for tracking data will give staff greater access to information about students' progress, although their skills in analysing the data will require further development. Progress review meetings promise to be an effective tool for leaders and managers to hold teachers to account for the progress made by students in their classes.

The headteacher has submitted comprehensive plans to the local authority for restructuring the management and staffing at the Melbourne Centre with the aim of developing greater leadership responsibility among staff. The proposed formation of curriculum teams gives promise to the development of subject co-ordination. The head of the Melbourne Centre brings much-needed teaching experience to the post and clearly understands that the use of data about students' performance is a necessary key factor in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The headteacher has ensured that the head of the Compass Centre now has a job description and undertook a performance management review the day before this inspection. The head of the centre ensures that it runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and is effective in promoting a calm ethos and managing students' behaviour. Nevertheless, no demonstrable action has been taken to bring about any improvement, particularly in ensuring that the curriculum meets requirements. There are significant weaknesses in the strategic leadership of the centre, particularly in the use of data about students' performance to evaluate what needs to improve for



all groups and regular monitoring of teaching and learning to set expectations for all staff and ensure that the quality of education meets students' needs.

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 – satisfactory.
- Collect and rigorously analyse data to evaluate the school's performance – inadequate.

### External support

Following the unannounced visit on 4 November 2009 where it was found that the school had failed to eliminate weaknesses in safeguarding, the local authority acted swiftly to ensure that the school had all the necessary information to put in a place a single central record of staff checks. Child protection training for staff is now complete. The local authority continues to provide the headteacher with good support to ensure that remaining issues on the health and safety action plan are remedied as quickly as possible.

The school improvement partner has given good support to the headteacher during the short time that she has been in post. Advisory and coaching support for teaching and learning has begun but its impact has yet to be seen in improved outcomes for students. Mentoring support for the headteacher has been sourced from a National Leader of Education from Bournemouth local authority, along with specialist support for teaching and learning, operational matters and safeguarding. It is not possible to evaluate the impact of this yet. The task group has appropriate expertise within its membership to enable it to hold the school and those working with it to account. There is an urgent need now to find a replacement for the chair so that the management committee is equally effective in its role.

The local authority understands, through its own unannounced inspection, that there are significant concerns about the quality of education provided for the different groups of students at the Compass Centre. They know that shortcomings in the curriculum and in leadership and management are jeopardising the school's goal to be removed from special measures within the specified timeframe.

### Priorities for further improvement

At the Compass Centre:

- Take urgent and rigorous action to ensure students receive their full curriculum entitlement and that the curriculum is relevant to their needs.



- Take steps to ensure that the leadership and management understands, and is effective in, their role in driving forward improvement in the quality of education provided.