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Mrs J Smith
Headteacher
Southampton PRU The Melbourne Centre
18 Melbourne Street
Chapel
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Hampshire
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Dear Mrs Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southampton pupil referral unit (PRU) The Melbourne Centre

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 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 third 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 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 third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 February 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the heads of The Melbourne Centre and the Compass Centre, the special educational needs coordinator, the education welfare officer, a representative of the management committee and a representative from the local authority. Informal conversations were held with students at each site.

Context

The former executive headteacher is now appointed as the special educational needs coordinator and works three days a week across both centres. The home-school liaison officer is now appointed permanently and works three days a week at The Melbourne Centre. A new chair of the management committee has been appointed. Attendance Officers have been appointed at both centres. The head of the Compass Centre will retire in July 2010. Interviews to appoint a deputy headteacher for the Compass Centre, who will work alongside the head of the centre from Easter, took place during the week of this visit.

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

The school continues to develop its systems to monitor students' achievements. As some problems remain in getting detailed information about students' prior learning, the school is rightly introducing its own systems at both centres to test students' academic and personal starting points in order to set challenging targets for their achievement.

At The Melbourne Centre, the system for tracking students' progress is beginning to show a picture of individual progress in English, mathematics and science. While senior staff recognise that there are inaccuracies in some of the assessments, the system is becoming a useful management tool for discussing students' progress with teachers, parents and carers and, importantly, the students themselves. The newness of this system means that the full impact in improving students' achievement is not yet evident. The school's data show that, while some students make satisfactory progress and are on track to gain their predicted GCSE grades, others do not progress quickly enough to reach their targets. The school is aware of the work it needs to do, along with other agencies, to support those students who are not on course to take up education, employment or training at the end of this academic year.

The local authority has given good support in helping staff at the Compass Centre to devise a new range of assessments which will more appropriately measure students'



starting points, particularly in terms of their behaviour and personal development. The school recognises that, through these new systems, teachers must use the information effectively to plan lessons which match students' needs and set targets to raise all students' academic and personal achievement. The centre is about to introduce individual 'learning journeys' for students with the aim of helping them to better understand their own progress and the steps they need to take to further improve. The effectiveness of this will be evaluated at the next visit.

Progress since the last visit 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 – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

On the whole, students respond well to the staff's high expectations of behaviour. Any incidents are quickly defused because staff at both centres use behaviour management techniques consistently and calmly. Students continue to take opportunities to smoke at The Melbourne Centre but there are suitable plans in place to run anti-smoking programmes next term.

Students' continuing low attendance at both centres is at the forefront of the school's concerns. There is full recognition of the barrier that this presents to improving students' achievement. There are some positive 'green shoots' in individual attendance and, at The Melbourne Centre, the number of students achieving 75% attendance or more is increasing. The attendance of permanently excluded students at the Compass Centre remains a particular worry. The school knows that work needs to be done with these students to set expectations for attendance, particularly for those transferring to The Melbourne Centre.

The school and local authority are making concerted efforts to use all the available expertise and support available to improve attendance although there has not been time for these improvements to have significantly raised attendance levels. The new attendance sub-group of the task group has rigorously audited the current strategies to improve attendance and has a clear action plan in place against which to monitor their effectiveness. The education welfare officer and home-school liaison officer continue to play key roles in their work with individual students, parents and carers. The newly appointed attendance officers, through early morning calls, are giving clear messages to students, parents and carers that attendance and good punctuality are expected. The role of tutors in encouraging and accounting for students' attendance is now much clearer. Teachers are expected to account for attendance in each individual lesson, although not all are rigorous enough in doing so. The best lesson attendance occurs in English at The Melbourne Centre because there are very high expectations to which students respond well.



Progress since the last visit 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

As a result of the new lesson planning format, teachers' planning is more focused on matching activities to students' abilities and aspirations. Through rigorous monitoring, the headteacher has a very clear understanding of how well teachers use information about students' progress to plan effective lessons. More satisfactory and good lessons are being delivered at both centres, and outstanding teaching in English was observed at The Melbourne Centre. In both centres, teachers have good subject knowledge and engage in meaningful dialogue with students as a result. Progress reviews with students at The Melbourne Centre rightly give students an honest evaluation of the levels at which they are working. From discussions with them, students clearly know their target grades. A small proportion of teaching remains inadequate at both centres. This is because planning is still too focused on the delivery of content rather than on students' academic needs and how these will be met. This means that teachers cannot be sure that all students make the progress of which they are capable. Recent training for teaching assistants focused on their role in supporting learning. While most fulfil this role, there are some occasions when teaching assistants offer too much support to students rather than allowing them time to think and learn independently.

Students are gradually becoming accustomed to the curriculum at The Melbourne Centre although Year 11 students' engagement with it is still not as good as that of the Year 10 students. Students continue to gain the greatest enjoyment from practical subjects, outdoor pursuits and sporting activities.

Students at the Compass Centre now receive their correct entitlement to 24 hours of taught time per week. As well as ensuring the correct amount of time, a great deal of work and thought by the headteacher and staff have gone into remodelling the curriculum so that the time is planned purposefully for teaching and learning throughout the day. The 'Journey Through Compass' curriculum was less than a week old at the time of this visit and students and staff are not yet fully accustomed to this significant change. It is therefore not possible to evaluate its impact in terms of improving students' achievement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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



The effectiveness of leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management is rapidly gathering pace. The headteacher is influential in her role and is working very effectively with the local authority to make the required changes and improvements. Some of these changes have been achieved quite quickly, such as ensuring that safeguarding meets statutory requirements and introducing new curricula at both centres. Others, such as the use of assessment in teaching and learning and the strategies to improve attendance, are taking longer but are starting to make a difference. The headteacher has an honest and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses through the monitoring and evaluation systems which are proving to be rigorous and robust. There is a very clear vision about the developing strategic role of other senior leaders across the two centres while carefully building on the strengths and expertise which already exist.

The wealth of expertise and experience on the management committee contributes to the effectiveness of leadership and management. Regular meetings are firmly focused on monitoring the effectiveness of actions taken to improve provision and the impact these have on raising achievement. Minutes of meetings show that members are not afraid to ask challenging questions of the headteacher in their pursuit to drive forward improvements. While there are still some gaps in data, increasing analysis of information which is available is helping the school to set itself challenging targets for the future. The school recognises that it must use data about students' performance with increasing precision so that teaching and learning are fully effective in raising students' achievement.

Progress since the last visit 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 – satisfactory

External support

The school is benefiting from good quality support and advice from the local authority. It has been very proactive in ensuring safeguarding requirements are met and funding building improvements to remedy identified health and safety concerns. The coaching support for teaching and learning is much appreciated by staff and its impact is starting to be shown through the improved quality of lesson planning. The inspector for special educational needs gives highly valuable advice and has been particularly helpful in setting up new assessments at the Compass Centre. A further unannounced inspection by the local authority has helped the headteacher to build a picture of the quality of teaching and learning across the two centres and matches the headteacher's own evaluation of teaching quality. The school's drive to improve



the strategic role of centre leaders has been well supported by the local authority in its agreement to fund a new deputy headteacher post from Easter.

Priorities for further improvement

- Rigorously implement the strategies in place for improving attendance and monitor closely their effectiveness.
- Embed the systems for assessing students' attainment on entry and tracking their progress in order to inform accurate planning of lessons and thereby raise students' achievement.