

Tribal
1–4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123
1231enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0845 123 6001
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: Fiona.allan1@tribalgroup.com

8 July 2010

Mrs Jane Smith
Headteacher
Southampton PRU The Melbourne Centre
Melbourne Street
Chapel
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 5FB

Dear Mrs Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southampton PRU The Melbourne Centre

Following my visit to your school on 29–30 June 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 fourth 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 29–30 June 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers at The Melbourne School and The Compass School, the special educational needs coordinator, the senior education welfare officer and home-school liaison officer, a representative of the management committee and a representative from the local authority. Formal meetings were held with groups of students at both schools.

Context

The Southampton PRU is now known as The Melbourne and Compass Schools. At Compass School, a deputy headteacher has been appointed who is working in partnership with the head of school until her retirement in July. Two new teachers have joined Compass School and another will start in September. At Melbourne School, two new teachers have joined, one for music and information and communication technology (ICT) and another for food technology. A teacher has transferred from Compass School to teach mathematics. One teacher is currently suspended. The school is in the process of appointing an Alternative Education Manager and a Finance and Human Resources Officer.

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

The school has rightly made concerted efforts to secure accurate information about students' achievements, their attendance and specific additional needs upon arrival. This improved information about students' starting points is helping teachers to plan their lessons more closely to students' needs and a clearer picture of progress is starting to emerge at both schools.

The 'learning journeys' are developing into an effective tool for helping students at Compass School to chart their own personal and academic progress. They value the opportunity to publicly celebrate their achievements in improved behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning. Teachers are setting more challenging targets based on their improved knowledge of students' starting points. However opportunities are missed when marking work to indicate clearly the next steps towards those targets. A start has been made in charting the progress of each nine-week cohort. A recent analysis of one cohort clearly shows the correlation between improved attendance and good progress for half of the students in the group. The new deputy headteacher knows that a sharper assessment of students' progress remains a key area for further development.

At Melbourne School, students are becoming increasingly engaged with learning. In discussion with them, they say that teachers expect more of them now and most of the work they are given is challenging. However, Year 10 students found it difficult to explain what their targets are. Scrutiny of students' books in lessons shows that the target setting process is inconsistent between subjects and that levelling of some work, particularly in English, is insecure. Nevertheless, a clearer picture of students' progress through the school is emerging as a result of the series of progress reviews and the establishment of secure assessment processes. Year 11 students have suffered from inadequate quality of education in the past and this has affected their achievement. That said, their attendance at recent examinations was much better than in the past and, while attainment is likely to remain well below average, all are on track to leave with at least one qualification. Success has been achieved for some persistent absentees through successful work done to find alternative education placements. Having completed work experience, for example in brickwork, students have been offered local college courses for next year.

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

Students' behaviour has improved since the last monitoring inspection. This is due to them finding the curriculum more engaging and the higher expectations of staff. As one student said, 'They are much more strict now, but it's a good thing because it means we can get on with learning and not get annoyed by other people.' The postcards sent to students' homes to report good work and behaviour are much prized by students and there are some notable success stories as a result of this encouragement. Melbourne School's reward points for 'not smoking' have reduced the number of exclusions for smoking and are helping students to lead healthier lives. Relationships between staff and students are generally good with students at both schools saying there is always somebody to talk to. They say that they feel safe because the staff really care about them and that any potentially violent incidents are quickly defused by staff. Safeguarding arrangements remain securely in place.

Robust procedures, closer monitoring and effective interventions by the school and local authority are starting to have some impact upon attendance although the school knows there is more to be done. Students say that they are well aware of their attendance targets and that the school 'never lets up' reminding them and their parents and carers about the importance of regular attendance and the impact this has on their learning. There is a general upward trend among all groups of students and a continued increase in the number who achieve 75% attendance or more. Nevertheless, attendance levels at both schools remain well-below average. Persistent absenteeism remains an issue but there has been some reduction already through the sourcing of alternative education provision for a few Year 11 students; plans are in place to increase further these opportunities from September. The

reasons for zero attendance by a few students, particularly at Compass School, are outside the school's control. The school now requires accurate information and formal assessment prior to entry to avoid incorrect placements of students, particularly of those who are likely to never attend.

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

The quality of teaching and learning is improving with no inadequate lessons seen during this inspection. Teachers have benefited from coaching support from local authority advisors and, recently, from their peers. Lesson observations undertaken by senior leaders and local authority advisors have been helpful and constructive. In the good lessons observed, clear imperatives for learning were conveyed to students through swift pace, teachers' high expectations that work will be completed and the use of practical activities which enliven learning. Lesson plans generally include identification of the level at which students are working but there is still scope to include more specific learning targets for individuals and groups of students in lesson plans, so that all students are challenged to the full. Teaching assistants continue to gain confidence in supporting learning and are particularly effective when teachers' planning accurately directs them to support students' individual learning and behaviour needs.

The curriculum at Melbourne School is increasingly broad and flexible as staff strive to match it to students' needs, improve their attendance and ensure that all go on to employment, further education or training. Students' personal and social development is better supported by the change to in-school lessons with tutors and youth workers. The Vocational Pathways Coordinator is developing effective links with colleges and other providers to source work-related learning opportunities, for example in construction and motor mechanics, for excluded and 'hard to reach' students. The school recognises the need to raise students' aspirations and is planning opportunities to attain higher level GCSE qualifications as well as a broader range of pathways to accreditation, for example, the new BTEC Home Cooking Skills. Literacy support for students with additional needs is paying dividends at both schools in improving reading skills.

Students on nine-week placements are engaging well with the developing 'Journey Through Compass' curriculum, enjoying the integrated approach to learning and the consistency of having one teacher for most lessons. The nurture curriculum is helping students to understand their own learning and personal difficulties. This results in a more positive learning atmosphere in lessons and a calmer environment around the school. The school is now rightly focusing on improving the curriculum provision for the permanently excluded group of students. Good plans are in place for September for this group to experience a full curriculum offer in school and externally through the Youth Worker Service.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management of The Melbourne and Compass Schools continues to gather pace and is making a significant contribution towards enhancing the school's overall capacity to improve further. The headteacher's drive and determination have led to rapid and effective changes in the relatively short time that she has been in post. Staff are working well together under the senior leadership team and are keen to adapt and play their part in driving forward improvements. An important success of the senior leadership team has been to establish a clear and consistent message of challenging students to achieve high personal and learning standards, with the expectation that they will respond positively. This is very effectively shared with parents and carers in a new range of school leaflets. Students' discussions with the inspector confirm that this expectation is well founded with them saying things such as 'they really expect us to learn here' and that senior leaders 'listen to us and get things sorted out'. These high expectations have yet to have full impact on raising students' achievements and improving attendance levels.

Monitoring of teaching and learning and curriculum development is increasingly being undertaken by senior leaders with less reliance on local authority advisors. This is a good sign of the school's capacity to improve and stand on its own two feet. The school is beginning to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its work and data are being used with increasing focus to aid this process. The views of students, and their parents and carers, are not yet systematically sought but plans are in place to reconvene the student forum in September. The school is now well placed to take control of its own development plan and set out its future ambitions. The management committee is playing its part in supporting the school's development, although its role in holding it to account for meeting targets is less well developed.

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 – good
- Collect and rigorously analyse data to evaluate the school's performance – good

External support

Regular visits by the School Improvement Partner and systematic monitoring by the local authority task group continue to provide good support and challenge for the headteacher and senior leaders. Continued advisory support has made a good contribution to addressing areas of weakness and has placed the school on a much

stronger footing allowing some advisors to withdraw. The addition of a Senior Educational Welfare Officer is helping to strengthen the work being done in the attendance group to develop strategies for improvement. Records and discussions show that the task group has an accurate view of the progress being made by the school as does the School Improvement Partner.