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30 September 2010

Mr P Holroyd  
Gloucester and Forest Pupil Referral Services  
Russet House  
35 Russet Close  
Tuffley  
Gloucester  
Gloucestershire  
GL4 0RQ

Dear Mr Holroyd

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Gloucester and Forest Pupil Referral Services

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your centre on 21 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my thanks to the pupils, the centre managers, chair of the management committee and representative from the local authority for their welcome contributions to the visit.

Since the last inspection, the centre has not admitted any pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and some new staff appointments have been made.

As a result of the inspection on 15–16 January 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

good progress in making improvements

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils join the centre with many negative experiences in education and significant gaps in their learning. Consequently, their attainment is exceptionally low. Once at the centre, staff offer the pupils a welcoming and supportive environment for



learning within small groups. This helps them quickly recover their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils' attainment and overall progress have continued to rise well in English and Mathematics, although progress in improving science has been slower due to the lack of specialist teaching. However, the appointment of a well-qualified and experienced teacher is already having a positive impact.

The school has improved the overall learning opportunities by increasing teaching time. All pupils, including those with a statement of special educational needs, are now receiving the minimum statutory hours of teaching per week. Intensive monitoring of the quality of pupils' individual targets by senior staff means that most targets are now challenging, specific and measurable, although there is still some inconsistency and further training is being provided. In lessons teachers do not always emphasise targets sufficiently so that pupils know clearly what their targets are. Improvements in lesson planning mean that activities more closely match the varying needs and capabilities within the class.

An increasing proportion of pupils attend the centre for short-term programmes because they are at risk of being excluded from their schools. Effective new partnership arrangements with the schools ensure that these pupils return quickly and successfully.

The centre has introduced appropriate measures in order to raise attendance including a breakfast club, reward schemes and the deployment of specialist teaching assistants. Senior staff have begun to carefully gather and track attendance data, but they have not yet had time to collate and analyse all the information. Nevertheless, there are clear signs that attendance is steadily improving and there is strong evidence of some individual dramatic improvement particularly for short-stay pupils.

Since the inspection the centre has broadened its range of programmes leading to qualifications and staff have become more proficient at tailoring the programmes to match students' interest. These strategies have meant that the number of pupils who are leaving without a qualification has halved in one year and this reflects the school's good capacity to improve. Nevertheless, there still remain a few pupils, mainly those with a long history of non-attendance in their previous schools, who are not yet gaining externally validated qualification.

There are now good systems for establishing exactly where pupils are in terms of their academic and personal development when they join the centre. Leaders track pupils' progress over time in a more systematic way, although the summaries of this information are not always user-friendly. This hampers teachers when they come to plan pupils' next steps in learning. However, senior staff make good use of the information to identify more accurately where improvement is required and so the centre is much better placed to improve faster in the future.



The local authority provides good support. It has effectively assisted the centre in adopting an increasingly flexible role, especially in its work in the prevention of exclusion. This is having a strong impact in reducing the number of excluded pupils within the authority.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee  
Additional Inspector

## Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2009

- Improve pupils' attendance in Years 10 and 11 so that more can gain external accreditation before leaving school.
- Improve the progress of those pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 who have statements of special educational needs by ensuring that they receive their full entitlement of taught time.
- Ensure that data concerning pupils' progress is used to identify the PRU's strengths and areas for the development and so set challenging and measurable targets.
- Improve the quality of learning targets so that they are more specific to the individual needs of each pupil.