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Mrs M McMeechan
The Headteacher
Whitehouse Centre
Fulford Road
Hartcliffe
Bristol
BS13 9PB

Dear Mrs McMeechan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your centre on 24 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and to the local authority school improvement officer for their valuable contributions to the visit.

There have been no major changes in leadership, staffing or organisation of the centre since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 27 January 2009, the centre 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 centre has made:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment is exceptionally low because of the significant gaps in pupils' learning and their poor experience of education. Once at the centre, pupils' learning and progress improve, and their social and academic development begins to get back on track. The school's tracking data show that pupils' progress and results have continued to improve year on year. In summer 2010, every pupil in Year 11 left the centre with a qualification, with a minimum of five entry levels, and all went on to gainful training,



education or work. There are many improving elements in classroom teaching and learning. These include very positive relationships between staff and pupils and the gentle management of pupils when they begin to be distracted. However, there are still often insufficiently challenging activities provided for some pupils, especially those who can attain more highly.

The accommodation continues to be a barrier to pupils' enjoyment of learning, despite the staff's best endeavours. Staff have worked very hard to make the best of the unsuitable accommodation noted at the last inspection. Since then, staff have completed the refurbishment of the food technology area, computer suite, art room and dining hall. Two minibuses have been purchased to enhance the curriculum off site. For example, pupils now undertake motor vehicle maintenance programmes in vocational centres. They enjoy fishing in nearby lakes and undertake community work, for instance by building a grotto in a local primary school. The local authority says that, by Easter 2011, the centre will move to an alternative site that better meets the needs of pupils and the curriculum.

Despite the long time that it has taken to provide better accommodation, the local authority provides the centre with good support. This can be seen in the improvements it has made, in collaboration with the centre, for the placement of pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 3. The local authority has introduced new arrangements for alternative provision for these youngsters. There is now a much quicker turnaround and the number of pupils staying for longer than two terms at the centre has reduced significantly to just a few. There are no longer pupils coming in directly after the end of Year 6 without having had a chance to experience education in a mainstream secondary school. Pupils who have a statement of special educational needs are now placed much more quickly. There is still some inappropriate placing of a small number of pupils at the centre who have mental health difficulties or language difficulties.

Since the inspection, the staff have widened the range of opportunities to promote pupils' cultural development. These include opportunities to achieve in theatre studies and to attain indoor climbing awards. This year, the centre is offering its pupils opportunities to undertake Foundation Learning programmes that combine subject or vocational learning with functional skills and personal and social development. Although these are good steps forward, the centre has not yet undertaken an audit on the extent to which it promotes community cohesion. This means that it is not yet able to identify precisely where pupils' cultural development needs to improve, for example in valuing diversity or in developing the skills of participation and responsible action.

Senior staff at the centre are increasingly skilful at the collection and analysis of information about pupils' progress. This information is providing a much clearer picture of where improvement is necessary. Through this, and through its track record of increasingly positive results, the centre is steadily building its capacity to improve further.

During the inspection, safeguarding procedures were checked and found to meet the latest requirements.

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

- Work with the local authority to improve the quality of the accommodation, so that it better meets the needs of pupils and the curriculum.
- In conjunction with the local authority, improve the arrangements for the placement of Key Stage 3 pupils into appropriate placements.
- Improve the opportunities to promote pupils' wider cultural development.