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Mrs J Spensley  
The Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Spensley

#### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF STAFFORD PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Following my visit to your school on 5 December 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2006. 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.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management committee and the Director of Education for Stafford.

Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF STAFFORD PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 5 December 2007

### Evidence

The main focus of this monitoring inspection was to judge the aspects that were in need of further development at the time of the last monitoring visit. Observations of teaching and a scrutiny of work were undertaken. The inspector scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other teaching and non teaching staff, the district strategy improvement manager, school improvement professional, education inclusion manager, Connexions personal advisor, education welfare officer, and a group of students.

### Context

There have been two significant changes of staffing since the previous visit. A deputy headteacher has been appointed as well as an experienced full time teacher. The previous full time teacher has been seconded to a local special school.

### Achievement and standards

The PRU continues to take students who have previously failed to take advantage of educational opportunities and, as a result, their standards of achievement are understandably below the national average. The achievements of students in English, mathematics and science are now being assessed and results show that over the last term many have made good progress. However, for a small number of students, achievements have remained at the same level or dropped slightly. Examples of completed pieces of work in geography and physical education show good presentation skills, with the quality of writing demonstrating good progress from previously completed work.

The PRU's use of an external assessment system is helping staff to set literacy and numeracy targets and the weekly monitoring of these shows students are making at least satisfactory progress in both areas. The curriculum continues to be extended and, as at the time of the last visit, all students have access to their entitlement of 25 hours per week.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- raise achievement and increase the amount of curriculum time offered to pupils – good.

### Personal development and well-being

It is evident that students' personal development and well-being remain at the forefront of the PRU's work. Much thought is given to offering students the

opportunity to consider the benefits of developing healthy lifestyles. For example, a project on the dangers of excessive alcohol and the use of cannabis have been well received by students, who have readily entered into discussions and answered questions as part of a quiz on the topic.

There is now good recording of students' attendance at the PRU and on off site activities. This is beginning to show evidence of improvement. For this term attendance is at 87%, with over 75% of the students showing improved attendance rates as the term has progressed.

Students' behaviour has improved from the time of the previous visit and the impact of this is reflected in better attitudes to working in lessons. For example, in a lesson as part of a sports leadership award, the students behaved very well and showed genuine enjoyment in their work, eagerly completing written work in preparation for a visit to Molineux, the home ground of Wolverhampton Wanderers. Similarly, students who engaged in the drugs and alcohol project with external tutors were well behaved and fully engaged in the activities.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving and is now more effective in successfully engaging students in learning. Planning of lessons is based on a more accurate assessment of students' ability and prior knowledge and is linked to individual learning plans. These are reviewed weekly with targets being set for literacy and numeracy, as well as behaviour and social improvement. Positive aspects of teaching include lessons providing stimulation and challenge and an insistence from staff on high standards of behaviour. The PRU has identified weaknesses in subject knowledge in the teaching of mathematics and these are being addressed through training and the use of a specialist mathematics teacher for two days each week. Learning support assistants continue to play an important role in supporting students' behaviour and are now beginning to have an increased role in assisting students with their work because of the improvements to lesson planning and knowledge of students' learning targets.

The curriculum continues to place an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and science, with extension activities which have a strong emphasis on students' personal development. Participation in physical education is encouraged. The new sports leaders award, which has just been introduced, is already proving a very popular course. Work on ecological awareness has continued and this has been further recognised by the award of an Eco Silver Award.

Significant improvement has started to be made to the quality of support and guidance provided for students. The individual learning plans introduced this term are regularly reviewed and each student spends time with their allocated mentor to discuss their progress. Students comment on how much they appreciate this level of support. Within the plan the literacy and numeracy targets are regularly revised after being achieved. The behaviour/social targets, though, are too general and, as a result, many are the same now as when set at the start of term. This means that

they are not proving helpful in assessing students' progress. On the other hand, good progress has been made in developing a system to record students' behaviour in lessons. This is being amended as it is being tried out and, when completed, will allow an accurate profile of students' behaviour in lessons to be established.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher provides the PRU with strong leadership, which is helping bring about many of the improvements to the quality of provision. This term a real momentum to these improvements has been given by the new staff. They are already helping to create a real atmosphere of effective teamwork on the site. The PRU recognises that the priority now is to ensure that the many recent improvements become embedded in everyday practice and demonstrate they are having a positive impact on students' achievements. The developing database, including information on attendance, behaviour and progress, is an indicator that the PRU is well on the way to having a much better understanding of its effectiveness.

The school development plan is very detailed and demonstrates that the PRU is focused on making improvements that have a positive impact on students' achievements and experiences. Good improvements have also been made to the PRU's self-evaluation process and this now shows that staff have a good understanding of the PRU's purpose and role within the local authority. With the support of the local authority, strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning are being identified and the quality of both has improved as a result. Good systems, including the use of a published assessment package, have meant that the PRU now has a much better understanding of the progress students are making.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- devise and implement a realistic development plan for all aspects of the unit's provision, with targets and deadlines that are agreed by all – good
- introduce robust procedures to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and to monitor pupils' progress – good.

### External support

The local authority continues to provide positive support to the PRU. The redeployment of two new staff has had the effect of raising standards. Both the management committee and the 'core' committee have met regularly and held the PRU to account in relation to its performance. Good links with other schools have also added to the positive support for the PRU.