

CREATE Centre
Smeaton Road
Bristol BS1 6XN

Tel: 0117 909 9949
Fax: 0117 933 0501

Email:
info@voscur.org

Web:
www.voscur.org

6 December 2007

Nick Batchelar
Programme Director,
Children and Young People's Services
Council House
College Green
Bristol BS1 5TR

Dear Nick

Many of us in the voluntary vector have known Ruth Pickersgill for a long time, both as a colleague working in the voluntary sector and more recently as a partner working for Bristol City Council in Children and Young People's Services. Her commitment to Equalities is without question and has been the driving force behind her team's success in raising standards within the education field. She is much respected and appreciated and will be sadly missed when she leaves Bristol.

We are sorry that she is leaving and are concerned that this will be seen as an opportunity to disband the team that she has led so successfully in working with schools, governors, parents and community groups. It is vital that the momentum that has been built up in addressing the problems, particularly around the lack of achievement by BME pupils and the failure of schools to address these issues, is not lost.

Bristol has languished at the bottom of the league tables for too long and only just managed to reach an "adequate" standard, as far as attainment is concerned. Improvements in standards do not happen overnight and it would seem such a very retrograde step to go back to a past structure that did not work, when this model has demonstrated its success. There needs to be a dedicated team to continue to work with schools and the community groups delivering educational support services. It is so important that this dialogue

with schools, supplementary schools and the community is maintained so that common goals can be identified and services properly targeted.

We believe that if the team is dispersed the work will be fragmented and its impact will be diluted. The inclusive nature of the team's approach will also be lost. It is also important that the team has an experienced strong leader to act as the catalyst and provide the drive to maintain the improvement that has been achieved.

Whilst we are aware that savings have to be made, we would suggest that this is not a sensible place to be thinking of a cost cutting exercise and would urge you, if you were planning to break up this team, to consider the consequences, and reject any such plan.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Stephenson
Chief Executive

CC Derek Pickup, Executive Member for Children and Young People
Heather Tomlinson, Director, Children and Young People's Services