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2 April 2011

Sue Wright
The Bridge Education Centre
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SO50 9DB

Dear Mrs Wright

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Bridge Education Centre

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 31 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the students for sharing their work with me and to the time given by a member of the management committee and the school improvement partner.

As a result of the inspection on 2–3 February 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Since the previous inspection, the Centre has moved to a new purpose-built site that provides high quality accommodation.

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.

The school has made satisfactory progress in refining the use of assessment. It has established tracking systems and teachers are now recording students' termly progress. The centre has been effective in ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate through working closely with mainstream schools. The recent appointment of a member of the extended leadership team to monitor progress should ensure a more robust system in checking how well each student is doing and highlight any areas of concern. Where concerns about progress have been raised, senior staff have taken quick action. For example, girls are receiving extra support in mathematics because it was recognised that they were not making the progress they should.



Students are making satisfactory progress overall and this is rapidly improving because staff are now setting challenging targets that are more closely aligned to national expectations. Students' achievements are being supported well by their increased attendance at the centre. There is clear evidence that the vast majority have improved their attendance from their previous settings. The centre has very good systems for ensuring students attend, and much is achieved as a result of the good relationships with parents and carers. Quick action is taken when a student does not arrive for lessons, and the centre works closely with the education welfare service to support families. For those students in the assessment group, attendance is above average. For the majority of students, attendance is broadly average. There are, though, a small number of students, particularly in Year 11, whose attendance falls below national expectations. The local authority's computerised system is not yet enabling the centre to have an accurate overview of attendance because it does not take into account the part-time nature of some students' courses. The centre is working with the local authority to address this situation.

Effective action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching and ensure many aspects are now more consistent. Lessons are better structured because planning is more detailed. There are clear strengths in teaching, including the good use of subject knowledge to support explanations. Learning is well supported by the use of technology and the good pace of lessons. For example, in an excellent English lesson, slides showing pictures of Vietnam were overlaid with the words of the poem the students were reading about the war. The pace of questioning and high expectations of the teacher ensured that students developed a very good understanding of what the poet was trying to portray. The management of behaviour across the centre is good and ensures that students take responsibility for the way they behave to staff and to each other. Effective systems, such as students' individual 'tracker' folders, enable students to evaluate their progress against the centre's learning codes. Their academic targets are also included in these folders but teachers are not always making best use of this information to ensure work is consistently matched to each student's ability. The marking of work is often detailed and there is excellent practice, for example in English, with high quality, detailed feedback to students about how they can improve their work. As yet, though, opportunities are missed to ensure all students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.

A new management structure has resulted in devolved responsibilities to staff. Clear roles have been established that are providing more effective systems for monitoring aspects of provision such as students' behaviour and progress. The role of the management committee is also developing. Members of the committee acknowledge that they need to be more actively involved in the centre in order to become less reliant on the head of centre's reports. This, they recognise, will enable them to provide a greater level of challenge to the centre.



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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall

Sarah Mascall
Additional Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010.

- Raise the achievement of pupils who are not medically unwell by:
 - refining the use of assessment to enable swift intervention for pupils who are falling behind
 - using attendance data more carefully to targets areas where pupils' attendance is poor
 - improving consistency of teaching by making sure that all lessons are well planned, well structured and appropriately paced, that explanations are clear and that teachers assess and respond to the level of understanding reached by different pupils.
- Strengthen the strategic and quality assurance roles of the extended leadership team.