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5 May 2011

Steve O'Gara
Executive Headteacher
Eston Centre (EOTAS)
Normanby Road
Middlesbrough
TS6 9AD

Dear Mr O'Gara

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Eston Centre (EOTAS)

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 May 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the students, the chair of the management committee and representatives of the local authority for their help.

Since the previous inspection a new executive headteacher has been appointed. Two teachers have left and been replaced. The number of available places has been capped at 100. At the time of this inspection visit there were 90 students on roll; 14 in Key Stage 3 attending the Eston Centre, 34 in Key Stage 4 attending the Greystones Centre, 19 in receipt of home tuition, seven taking part in full-time vocational education at partner providers and six students participating in the 'school on wheels' project. The management committee has been reconstituted with several new members drawn from senior staff at feeder mainstream schools.

As a result of the inspection on 6 October 2010, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Many students join the centre with levels of attainment that are below average due to unsuccessful experiences in mainstream schools. For many this includes extended periods of absence or incidents of severely disruptive behaviour which have resulted in exclusion. Most students make satisfactory progress in lessons but this does not enable them to make up for prior underachievement and reach the standards expected for their age when they leave.

More-extensive information on students' prior attainment is now available from feeder schools due to the establishment of better partnership and admission arrangements. Individual targets are set and the system to monitor progress is improved, however, on

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occasions targets are not ambitious enough and do not close the gaps in attainment or attendance sufficiently.

During the inspection visit students behaved in a friendly and relaxed way. During lessons they got on well with their teachers and each other, although on occasions they were not sufficiently challenged or interested by the work they were set. A better system has been introduced to monitor the quality of teaching and guide teachers. However, weaknesses remain in the way teachers use assessment information to personalise learning. Students make the best progress in lessons where they are given enough time to work independently, for example, in developing mathematical or vocational skills. Progress is slower in lessons when teachers spend too much time talking and do not allow students enough time to practise their reading, writing or independent study skills.

The rate of exclusions for incidents of poor behaviour has been significantly reduced as the result of the introduction of an improved behaviour management strategy. A new system to reward positive behaviour has been introduced and is used successfully in some lessons.

There has been an impressive increase in the number of students successfully integrated back into mainstream schools as a result of the development of better processes and partnerships between the service and mainstream schools.

A much improved system has been introduced to monitor attendance rates and, overall, attendance has improved. However, despite the best efforts of staff, the attendance of many students remains well below average. Further actions are being planned to analyse the reasons for poor attendance and redouble efforts for improvement.

The new executive headteacher has had a very significant impact on improving the morale of staff, making tracking and monitoring more robust and introducing systems and procedures that ensure all staff are clear about what is expected of them. However, the new systems have not had time to have sufficient impact on some outcomes for learners and to improve the proportion of good or better teaching. The single central register of safeguarding checks on staff presently meets current requirements.

The local authority's amended statement of action and action plan provide a very detailed agenda for improvement and the authority has provided good support for the school through the work of its officers and the School Improvement Partner.

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

Dr Andrew Johnson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 6 October 2010.

■ Improve outcomes for students by:

- implementing a behaviour management strategy which reduces exclusions
- rewarding positive behaviour more effectively
- ensuring that learning opportunities consistently engage and motivate students
- ensuring students develop sufficient skills and attitudes which will enable them to successfully reintegrate into mainstream schools.

■ Improve the centre's effectiveness, by:

- ensuring that key management positions are in place and senior leaders establish a system which links more effectively with referring schools to identify individual students' needs and their current levels of attainment
- developing stronger links with outside agencies and parents and carers to improve students' attendance
- providing teachers and other staff guidance to help them improve their assessment of students' progress and make full use of the information gathered
- implementing policies which reflect the centre's ambitions for its students and ensuring that all staff, students and parents and carers are clear about what is expected of them.