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Mrs Tania Craig
Headteacher
New Horizons Learning Centre (PRU)
Charborough Road
Filton
Bristol
BS34 7RB

Dear Mrs Craig

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of New Horizons Learning Centre

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 February 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the representatives of the local authority for taking time to talk to me.

Since the previous inspection the primary centre has moved to new purpose-built premises and a local headteacher has been seconded to take over the primary centre. Those pupils on 6 day+ intervention now attend a centre based at Richmond Road Campus. An associate leader has been appointed for two days a week to support leadership at the Severnside Centre. A member of staff has been appointed with responsibility for safeguarding across the whole provision.

As a result of the inspection on 26–27 September 2011, 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 pupils' achievement.

The executive headteacher, who had only been in post three weeks before the previous inspection, together with her senior leadership team, has ensured a clear focus on addressing the shortcomings identified in the previous inspection report. Senior leaders have worked well with staff to bring about improvements. They have been supported by the local authority which has provided an extensive range of training together with regular support. This is bringing about positive changes.

Quick action by senior leaders has addressed the safeguarding concerns raised by the previous inspection. The appointment of one person to oversee provision across all the centres has ensured that there is a consistent approach to training and record keeping. Child protection training has been provided for all staff and policies reviewed to ensure they meet requirements. Staff are clearly aware of the correct procedures on all sites and records are now well organised and documentation clear. Checks on staff are rigorous and records maintained well. The governing body has a clear oversight of all aspects of safeguarding and meets regularly with the teacher responsible. Pupils feel safe in the centre and consider that any concerns they may have are addressed quickly by staff.

The monitoring of teaching across the pupil referral unit (PRU) is well established and supported by outside consultants. There has been a considerable focus on improving the quality of teaching at Severnside. Regular monitoring of staff has ensured that leaders have a clear overview of the strengths and areas of development. They have used this information well to ensure training is well matched to the areas needing improvement. As a result, there are now more aspects of teaching that are becoming consistent. Staff, for example, share learning objectives with the pupils and have a better awareness of the levels pupils are working at. The pace of learning is often appropriate ensuring that pupils remain on task. Not all teachers though, ensure that work is matched to pupils' ability and on occasions the tasks set are not always challenging enough. The marking of pupils' work is up to date but senior leaders are in the process of training staff in the skills of providing detailed feedback to ensure pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Where detailed feedback is given, such as in mathematics, pupils comment that this is helpful. Pupils say they feel they are making progress in their learning. They consider that recently they have been more motivated in their work and have an understanding of the need to do well to achieve their goals. One student, for example, talked with enthusiasm about wanting to go on to college to study engineering. There are a range of appropriate opportunities for pupils to be involved in vocational courses, and opportunities, for example, to do work experience are valued by the pupils.

The PRU has collected considerable information about pupils' achievements and there are now regular meetings with staff to track pupils' progress. As a result of training and moderation exercises, teachers' assessments are more accurate and targets set are generally challenging. There is now a better identification of how well pupils are progressing and quick action taken to support individuals. Senior leaders are in the process of training centre managers and subject leaders in analysing the information available to them so that this can be used more effectively to bring about long-term improvements. At present, data show that pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. Primary-aged pupils clearly enjoy their learning and in the lessons observed made satisfactory and on occasions good progress in their learning.

Behaviour across the PRU is generally positive. At Severnside, which deals with a number of young people with statements of special educational needs for emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, behaviour has been less settled. Senior leaders have put in a range of strategies to support pupils' behaviour and these are gradually having a positive impact. Fixed-term exclusions were high last term as staff made clear their expectations particularly in terms of zero tolerance regarding smoking on site and verbal abuse to staff. Pupils feel that behaviour is settled generally, but they say there are good days and bad days. They comment that there is very little bullying and talk positively about how quickly staff respond where this does occur. The individual daily points sheet used in each lesson together with new rewards systems are valued by pupils and are helping them to improve their behaviour. In lessons observed at Severnside, pupils generally behaved well; pupils only became unsettled when they were not challenged by the tasks or lessons were not well planned. Attendance levels remain a cause for concern. New strategies have been established including more rigorous systems for contacting parents and carers on the first day of absence and improved links with the education welfare officer. There are now rewards for good attendance and staff monitor pupils closely, working hard to ensure that they are 'buying into' the courses offered. Many pupils improve their attendance from their previous settings and there is evidence that attendance for most individuals is improving. However, it is too early to fully assess the impact of the new systems.

There is a clear sense of commitment on the part of staff as they are keen to bring about improvements, and the good use of consultants and links with mainstream schools are doing much to develop staff skills. Regular staff meetings and a clear understanding of the direction for the PRU is doing much to ensure a better shared vision by staff. Initiatives, such as the teaching and learning newsletter to raise staff awareness of the issues in teaching and learning and keep them informed of all that is going on, are positive.

The local authority has addressed the weaknesses in its statement of action and has ensured that there are now very clear targets and time lines. It is committed to achieving its target of 100% satisfactory teaching.

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 Mascal

Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2011.

- Improve safeguarding and care by:
 - ensuring that procedures meet current government guidelines
 - helping all staff to understand safeguarding policies
 - monitoring provision rigorously to ensure compliance to agreed policies and procedures
 - ensuring that all pupils feel secure.
- Improve teaching, particularly at The Severnside Campus, so that pupils make good progress by:
 - varying tasks to fine tune them to the different needs and abilities of pupils
 - embedding the marking policy so that all pupils know how well they are doing
 - regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in all the centres.
- Improve attendance for the older pupils by:
 - working closely with pupils, parents and carers, and support agencies
 - ensuring that pupils' interest is engaged when they are at the PRU
 - building on the improvements made to the vocational experiences.
- Develop a shared understanding and commitment by staff across all centres.