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25 November 2013

Mr Les Bell  
Headteacher  
The Rubicon Centre  
Raincliffe Street  
Selby  
North Yorkshire  
YO8 4AN

Dear Mr Bell

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Rubicon Centre , North Yorkshire**

Following my visit to your school on 22 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that performance management includes specific targets for improvement that reflect the performance of individual teachers
- provide opportunities for leaders at all levels to work alongside staff in the classroom to develop teachers' skills and promote quality learning during lessons
- review the literacy and numeracy action plans to ensure that all strategies designed to secure improvement have outcomes that relate to pupils' achievement.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A range of documentation was evaluated including school improvement plans and targets related to performance management.

## **Context**

The centre moved to its present site in January 2013. The senior leadership team including the headteacher all joined the school the previous year. The number of students attending the centre is rising. The Chair of the School Management Committee resigned following the previous inspection. A headteacher from a school within the authority is currently undertaking the role of chair on an interim basis.

## **Main findings**

A number of improvements have been made since the beginning of the autumn term. There is now a mechanism in place to track students' progress over time. The quality of marking has improved. Teacher's comments are evaluative as well as informative, so that students receive guidance about how they may improve. Lesson planning makes clear reference to expected outcomes and some teachers are beginning to make better use of assessment in order to ensure a better match of work to students' learning needs in all subjects.

In recent weeks the headteacher in conjunction with the school management committee and the local authority have drawn up a school improvement plan which successfully addresses all of the pertinent areas identified at the time of the previous inspection. The headteacher acknowledges that there is a lot to do if provision is to be good. He is determined that the centre will not solely be about managing behaviour but will be increasingly concerned with raising students' achievement in order to enhance their life chances. The headteacher rightly accepts that if this is to happen then the quality of teaching and learning must improve. However, if this is to be achieved quickly and not left to chance then targets for improvement as part of the performance management process must be more closely aligned to the specific needs of individual teachers. The focus on learning represents a shift in emphasis and a change in culture within the centre. This is to be welcomed. It also means raising teachers and students' expectations and ensuring that staff are held to account for students' progress. Formal systems are in place to monitor teachers' performance. But this is not enough. In order to develop teachers' skills further, leaders at all levels could make a significant difference to the quality of teaching and learning if they worked alongside staff, encouraging, supporting and demonstrating effective practice.

School leaders recognise that for many students the priority is improved literacy and numeracy skills. This will help them to access learning across the curriculum. Subject leaders in literacy and numeracy have formulated action plans designed to address this issue. Training has been given to staff about enhancing students' reading and writing skills which is influencing practice. Targeted intervention programmes are being pursued and resources to promote reading have been purchased so that material is more suited to students' interests. However, action plans do not make specific reference to what it is students will be able to do as a result of the initiatives being carried out. This needs to be addressed so that subject leaders are able to know if their main objective, to raise achievement, is being realised.

The centre management committee are in a state of transition and further changes are likely in the future. The local authority is looking to supplement the present committee with relevant expertise and experience in order to offset any future changes in personnel. Members appear to have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the

centre and also see the key priority as improving the quality of teaching. Those members with leadership and management experience in education are well placed to hold the headteacher to account.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing valuable support to the centre. The current Education Development Adviser has provided effective guidance to the headteacher regarding school improvement. His experience and knowledge of Pupil Referral Units mean that he is well placed to support the school as it moves forward. Training has been made available to staff in order to develop their subject knowledge concerning the teaching of information technology, humanities and reading and writing.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler

**Her Majesty's Inspector**