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29 November 2013

Mr Paul Cottam
Interim Headteacher
Silverbank Centre
Silverbank
Chatham
ME5 0LB

Dear Mr Cottam

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Silverbank Centre

Following my visit to your school on 27 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher and other senior staff, members of the interim management boards, and a representative from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection, a decision has been taken to split the Silverbank provision into two separate schools. The local authority is currently in discussion with the Department for Education and a sponsor about The Oaks provision becoming a free school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The interim arrangements for the leadership and management of the two school sites at Silverbank, established at the time of the last inspection, have ensured that

pupils' education has not been disrupted while initial plans are put in place to split the two provisions.

Despite some uncertainties about the future arrangements for the Silverbank site, you, at The Oaks and the acting head of The Rowans have not wasted any time in responding to the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. You both have made some necessary improvements in the key areas of the quality of teaching and raising students' achievements, adding more rigour to the way the schools are managed and their performance evaluated.

Improvement plans, especially at The Oaks, are clear and are appropriately addressing the key areas. The Rowans' plan, while addressing the key areas specific to that site, would benefit from some additional specific timescales and outcomes for the improvement activities that are being undertaken.

There are separate interim management boards for the two provisions, though their roles and responsibilities are not yet clearly defined with reference to the current overall management board, for the Silverbank site. This board has not yet met during this transition period. The two new management boards for The Oaks and The Rowans, although not yet at full strength, have some suitably experienced members in place. The management board at The Rowans is beginning to provide sharper challenge and support to the acting head.

The local authority has provided some helpful strategic support and has brokered additional consultant support and advice for The Oaks and The Rowans. However, the overall statement of action is not suitably detailed about what needs to be done, the timescales involved and who is responsible for checking the quality of the actions taken in meeting the areas for improvement raised at the last inspection. Plans do not now adequately reflect the current position, in light of recent decisions about the future of site.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Medway. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl
Her Majesty's Inspector