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7 February 2014

Mrs Wendy Vincent
Headteacher
Unity Learning Centre
Forest Road West, Radford
Nottingham, NG7 4ES

Dear Mrs Vincent

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Unity Learning Centre

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 December 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:

- make sure that teachers see and share more good practice by increasing the school's links and partnerships with other good or better schools, and through effective training and professional development programmes
- improve the way teachers and support staff monitor pupils' progress, and ensure that this focuses on improving pupils' basic literacy skills, and their attainment English and mathematics
- improve the learning environment in classrooms and other areas, including the school's library, so that pupils are motivated and sustain more interest in their learning.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Her Majesty's Inspector also met the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority; the Head of Inclusion and Disability, and a special educational needs adviser who is also the Head of Inclusion Services. All meetings focused on the actions taken by the school since its last inspection and the plans aimed at taking the school forward. The school improvement plan and action plans were evaluated together with the school's data and analysis of rates of attendance and trends, as well as plans that leaders have to monitor the quality of teaching and information about post-16 pathways and destinations.

Main findings

Senior leaders, governors and staff have already improved pupils' attendance. Action plans rightly focus on sustaining a rise in attendance rates and improving the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. Nevertheless, leaders and staff must refocus their efforts on seeing and sharing good classroom practice, even if this means visiting or linking with other good or outstanding schools. There are clear plans in place to change the way English and mathematics are led and managed with middle leaders taking on more responsibility for overseeing pupils' progress and influencing improvements to teaching. It is important that these key positions are led by good teachers and that the next stage in the plan includes training to improve teachers' understanding of assessment so they can better monitor and measure pupils' progress. Classrooms, resources and other areas of the school, such as the school library, are too mundane and do not provide pupils with enough stimulation, engagement or an environment that sustains pupils' interest in their learning.

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's advisers and those responsible for managing special educational needs provision and inclusion have an accurate assessment of the school's effectiveness and performance. The links with the educational welfare service and other agencies have been used effectively to improve attendance and pupils' behaviour. There is a shared commitment by both governors and the local authority to forge closer links with other schools and this has the potential to provide greater clarity for teachers about what constitutes good and outstanding achievement and teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Nottingham.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector