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Mr Tony Middleton
Interim Executive Headteacher
Sheffield Inclusion Centre
Spring Lane
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Dear Mr Middleton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sheffield Inclusion Centre

Following my visit to the centre with Henry Moreton, Additional Inspector, and Jacqui O' Connor, Ofsted shadow, on 3 and 4 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the centre's recent section 5 inspection.

This visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the centre became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The centre is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The centre may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Management Board and the Interim Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better, particularly at the primary unit, at Spring Lane and for teenage mothers by:
 - matching teachers to the age group and subjects for which they have been trained, particularly in English and mathematics
 - providing appropriate training for non-qualified staff who are working as teachers
 - making sure all adults manage pupils' behaviour appropriately and in line with the centre's policy
 - making sure that all lessons are well planned so they are not too easy nor too difficult for the individual pupils
 - ensuring that adults have a good understanding of the National Curriculum levels and that they are accurate in their assessments of pupils' attainment and progress.

- Ensure that all pupils make at least good progress in order to raise attainment and improve their achievement by:
 - improving attendance through the consistent use of the policies and systems agreed by senior leaders
 - making certain that pupils are taught all the subjects they are entitled to and that the curriculum is carefully matched to their individual needs, age and interests
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects such as science and the humanities
 - working with pupils to set targets for literacy and numeracy so they understand how they will make progress and improve.

- Ensure that leadership and management of the centre are highly effective by:
 - making sure that all the required and recommended policies are in place, are understood by staff and are firmly embedded in their classroom practice
 - making certain that leaders check carefully on the quality of teaching and the curriculum in all parts of the centre's work
 - building on the recently introduced system for checking pupils' progress so they achieve equally well regardless of gender, background, disability or special educational needs
 - making certain that the management committee fulfils its role of checking and questioning what is happening in all parts of the centre
 - making sure that some of the longer established leaders and middle managers fully understand their responsibilities and improve their performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 July 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, other centre leaders and a local authority representative. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) also met with the Chair of the management committee and two staff from the outreach team. Documents such as: the centre's policies and procedures; monitoring and evaluation records of pupils' progress; curriculum developments; and the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance, were evaluated. Inspectors also visited nine lessons at the secondary and primary sites and four tutorial sessions. They spoke with pupils and staff about their work, examined the work in pupils' books and observed pupils' behaviour at social times and between lessons. HMI also visited two of the centre's off-site provisions for pupils. Visits to classrooms were carried out with the centre's leaders.

Context

Since the March monitoring inspection the seconded deputy headteacher's post at the secondary provision has been extended to five days each week. The seconded assistant headteacher at the primary provision has been withdrawn. Several staff have resigned, including all of the teachers at the primary provision, whose roles are being covered by supply staff. Several appointments have been made to replace most of the vacancies, but a number remain. The centre is advertising to fill these posts. The local authority has decided that the primary provision will no longer be based at Clifford Road from September 2014. Year 11 pupils have left the centre.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The centre's latest academic tracking data for pupils at the Spring Lane and Clifford Road sites indicate that more pupils than was the case at the previous monitoring inspection are making at least expected progress, albeit from low starting points. The challenge for the centre is not only to get pupils learning again, but to speed up their progress and regain some of the lost ground in their knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects, caused by their previous underachievement. While Year 11 pupils are set to gain more accreditation than ever before at entry level, only one out of 58 is set to gain an A* to C at GCSE in English or mathematics. It remains the case that too few pupils will meet their targets or achieve well when set against their starting points and capabilities. Enhanced analysis of progress information by groups is allowing the centre to have a better understanding of which of its tactics are bearing fruit and where further intervention is required.

The quality of teaching

Overall, inspection evidence and the centre's own monitoring records indicate that teaching is having a more effective impact on pupils' learning and progress. Several staff are planning effectively and providing pupils with stimulating work that is not too hard or too easy and using marking and feedback that helps pupils to realise how they can improve their work. Staff training is increasing the effectiveness of

their practice and is having a positive impact on the learning climate. Pupils are more engaged and their attitudes to learning and their work ethic are becoming stronger.

The outreach team is having a positive impact in engaging and educating pupils at home, overseen by subject specialists at the centre who set and mark the work taught. Similarly, pupils observed at off-site provision had some good opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of horticulture, construction and farm management. However, it remains the case that there are no specialist English or mathematics teachers in Key Stage 3 and several well-regarded teachers have left the primary provision. So, while there is evidence of greater consistency in teaching and learning, it is far from the case that pupils across the sites get a core diet of effective teaching. This is reflected by the variable rates of progress still apparent. More time and greater stability are still vital to enable this improving practice to prove its impact more clearly. Displaying pupils' artwork is helping the Spring Lane site to feel less sterile and gives the message that pupils' work is valued. The centre should do more to increase the pupils' 'footprint' at the centre.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The atmosphere and ethos are improving in classrooms and in general staff manage pupils' behaviour appropriately, consistently and in line with the centre's policy. Social and unstructured times were noticeably calmer. This improving picture is supported by the centre's latest monitoring data, which show a fall in the number of exclusions and major incidents. A high staff presence around known 'hotspots', extra staff training and a revised sanction and reward strategy are having a positive impact. However, children in the care of the local authority are being excluded most often.

Pupils' attendance is rising. Within this improvement, Key Stage 3 pupils, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in the care of the local authority have the lowest attendance. Attendance at Clifford Road remains around 90% and attendance at Spring Lane has risen to around 60%. It is moving in the right direction but is still far too low. The link between attendance and progress is illustrated by the fact that pupils with at least 75% attendance in Key Stage 3 make at least expected progress. However, only 40% of pupils fall into this category. The outreach team continue to have some success in raising the attendance of pupils with exceptionally poor attendance records.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The leadership strategies being implemented to enhance the quality, consistency and impact of the education the centre provides to pupils are more embedded and there is a resultant improvement against each of the centre's key priorities. This is underpinned by regular and candid monitoring and evaluation, which is informing and shaping further improvement work. For example, the outreach programme has been expanded to include pupils other than Year 11. Twilight sessions have been introduced as a first step in reintegrating pupils who have rarely attended despite

being on roll over time. Also, a multilingual member of staff is working closely in the community to reengage a group of Roma-Slovak pupils, whose attendance and progress has been particularly poor. The centre's leaders have won over staff with their know-how, clarity of purpose and the positive impact they are having. Appraisal arrangements are rigorous. The required and recommended policies are in place. Staff understand them and are using them more consistently in their practice.

The increased confidence, commitment and performance of other key leaders, and staff in general, evident at the previous monitoring inspection, have been sustained and they are relishing the extra flexibility and responsibility they now have to 'deliver the goods'. This is reflected in green shoots of progress in several areas of the centre's work, including the breadth of the curriculum, the quality of behaviour management and pupils' learning, progress and engagement. Staff are starting to feel vital to the centre's success, rather than disillusioned and scapegoats.

The additional senior leaders are making a real difference and working well with existing staff to build on the initial successes achieved. But they are not complacent and recognise that there is substantial further work to do before the centre is 'out of the woods'. The thorns in the centre's side continue to be attendance and staff turbulence. While both show signs of improvement, leaders accept that it is not good enough simply to be better than you were. In this centre, stability in staffing and attendance levels that compare favourably with national averages are the keys to cementing and accelerating the impact of the improvement strategies. The centre is moving in the right direction but is not ready to exit special measures yet.

Governors have an accurate view of the centre's current effectiveness and trajectory, gained from: the improved quality of progress data they are given; their drop-in visits to the centre; and regular evaluation meetings with senior leaders. They are cautiously optimistic about the centre's improving efficiency, accreditation, and progress rates. However, they also recognise the potential threat posed by a squeeze on finances, staff turbulence and a splintered approach to centre provision going forward.

External support

The local authority's role is now more consultative than 'hands on', although they continue to monitor and evaluate the centre's progress in tackling the areas for improvement suitably. They are also involved in brokering the centre's sponsorship by Sheffield College and deciding the future of the centre's primary provision.

The centre's proposed conversion to an academy is not yet finalised and the uncertainty this has caused has prompted some of the resignations. The future of the primary provision is similarly vague. It does not appear to be part of the centre's plans for conversion to an academy, nor does it have a home for the next academic year at present. The centre is also carrying a large budget deficit. These matters need resolving with urgency to avoid further destabilisation and/or derailing the good work being done to improve the effectiveness of the centre.