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David Euridge and Sarah Clark
SW Surrey Short Stay School
Pewley Hill
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Dear Mr Euridge and Ms Clark

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to SW Surrey Short Stay School

Following my visit to your school on 15 September 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 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 for improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that improvements to teachers' planning and marking are consistently implemented and that these are evaluated in terms of their impact on students' attendance and achievement
- develop more ambitious target setting in order to maximise the progress made by students while they are at school
- ensure better attendance for all students
- establish strong strategic partnerships with local mainstream schools in order to ensure the best outcomes for students.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher responsible for teaching and learning, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the management committee and the local authority leadership partner to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. You took me on a tour of the school and we visited all classes to observe teaching. I looked at marking and students' work in books and scrutinised a range of documents, including records of students' attendance and behaviour, information about students' progress and attainment, minutes of line management meetings and records of observations of teaching.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection visit in March 2013 there have been significant changes to staffing in the school. The headteacher was absent from the school from December 2013 and then resigned from her post in April 2014. Only three members of staff are still in post since the previous inspection visit. The school is currently led by an Executive Headteacher and a seconded Head of School from two other pupil referral units. The assistant headteacher joined the school in January 2014. The school is currently fully staffed, although not all posts have been filled permanently.

Main findings

There have been significant improvements to teaching, students' achievement and behaviour since the section 5 inspection. A strong leadership team is now in place and has already ensured stability, consistency and higher standards in the school. Simple and effective changes have been introduced such as implementing an earlier start to the day and moving the staffroom and school leaders' offices downstairs near classrooms and the students' common room. You have also arranged for the staff briefing to take place at the end of the day and a simpler behaviour management and reward system. You have introduced a more formal dress code for students and you now insist that students stay on site at lunchtime. This has led to improvements in students' behaviour and learning.

Your clear focus has rightly been on improving teaching. You have ensured that specialist staff have been appointed and that the curriculum on offer to students is appropriate, interesting and will help them with their next steps. Students now have the opportunity to study five subjects at GCSE or equivalent level, including English, mathematics and science, helping to build on their previous experience in the mainstream school. Students also have opportunities to follow courses at local colleges and have work experience, preparing them for further education and employment. You have established a specialist team of key workers responsible for

pastoral care so that teachers can concentrate on teaching and learning while students have appropriate levels of support for their behavioural and emotional needs.

There is now a more effective method of tracking and evaluating students' progress from their starting points at the school and you can identify improvements in students' achievement. This system now shows that more students are making rapid gains from when they join the school, in some cases in sharp contrast to their previous poor progress in their mainstream schools. You have ensured that better standards in English and literacy are being reached. The school is now adding considerably more value to students' achievement than it was previously and students are in a better position for the next steps in their education. However, there are still some inconsistencies about what good and outstanding progress looks like for students at the school, particularly when teachers have to meet very differing levels of ability. You rightly acknowledge that there is more work to do to ensure consistency of progress and that some students need further support. Students' achievement in mathematics previously caused concern, but there is now a specialist teacher in place and there are clear signs that students are achieving more.

There is no doubt that there is a sharp focus on improving day-to-day teaching. You make frequent visits to lessons to check on teaching. There are regular line management meetings and training to discuss lesson planning and students' achievement. You can identify exactly where improvements to teaching have been made. However, not enough has been done to evaluate the impact of better teaching on students' attendance and achievement.

In lessons seen during the inspection visit students took their lessons seriously, listened with concentration and were courteous and responsive to help and advice. They generally present their work neatly and take care of their books. Teachers listen well to students' responses and skilfully adapt their teaching to build on students' knowledge and understanding. Some teachers are extremely patient and persistent when double-checking students' understanding, particularly for those students who struggle to retain information. During the monitoring inspection, some students, who are often reluctant to push themselves for fear of failure, completed difficult tasks because the teacher subtly and sensitively introduced more challenging problems. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of the work to improve teaching and there are some inconsistencies in planning and marking. Many students are in the habit of responding to teachers' marking and acting on the advice given, but this is not yet fully established in the school, which is holding back some students' progress.

Under the new leadership, there has been a reduction in the number of exclusions and disruptive behaviour. Attendance for Year 8, 9 and 10 students is better than it was for similar age groups previously. However, attendance for older students

remains a concern. You recognise that there is continued work to do to improve students' attendance rates to match national averages.

The management committee reconstituted in April and now has clearer direction and more control over what the school needs to do to improve. Committee members now pay more attention to the day-to-day work of the school and have a more accurate view of students' achievement and the quality of teaching.

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 partnership with an outstanding pupil referral unit has undoubtedly benefited the school. It has brought strong direction, a positive, confident outlook and a tenacious focus on consistency. Regular review meetings challenge school leaders and set demanding targets for the school and management committee. The leadership partner for the school provides an objective view of the school and is able to support and challenge appropriately. A recent review by an education consultant accurately identified key areas to work on and rightly recognised the long way the school had come. Advisory support for English has further benefited specialist teachers and new staff.

It is recommended that the school seeks further external support for improving attendance and teaching and achievement in mathematics. The school and area as a whole would also benefit from better forward planning with local mainstream schools in order to improve outcomes for students at risk of exclusion or missing education.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector