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20 October 2014

Ms Caron Johnson
The Acting Headteacher
Silverbank Centre
Silverbank
Chatham
ME5 0LB

Dear Ms Johnson

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Silverbank Centre

Following my visit to your school on 15 October 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 which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in June 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve pupils' achievement through consistently good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring that pupils' progress in lessons is closely monitored to pick up and correct any mistakes and misunderstanding pupils might have
 - raising teachers' and pupils' expectations of what pupils can achieve in regard to their behaviour and attainment, particularly in the Oaks
 - paying close attention to the progress of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium and ensuring the gaps in attainment are closed rapidly
 - ensuring that all lessons are taught at a brisk pace, motivate pupils to do well and encourage them to have positive attitudes to learning.
- Build on improvements to attendance to ensure all pupils attend as regularly as they can and are punctual to school by:
 - challenging and supporting the families of pupils who do not attend regularly
 - raising pupils' and parents' expectations regarding the importance of good attendance and punctuality
 - consistently rewarding improvements in attendance and good attendance.
- Strengthen further the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to promote improvement by:
 - ensuring the local authority rapidly establishes appropriate arrangements for good governance of the centre and holding the centre to account for further improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement
 - creating long-term effective structures for governance, leadership and management for both parts of the current provision
 - ensuring effective support so that improvement is not impeded by planned changes to the provision.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 October 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the acting headteacher, the assistant headteacher, representatives from the local authority and a member of the management committee. Informal conversations were held with teaching and support staff, as well as with students. The inspector looked at samples of students' work during visits to classes with the acting headteacher. A wide range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documentation, evidence of monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and minutes of management committee meetings, was scrutinised. The school's systems for assessing, tracking and evaluating students' progress and the register of checks on staff were also examined.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the Silverbank Centre has been split into two unique schools. This school is currently requesting a name change to 'The Rowans'. The management committee is in the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher. The former head of school is currently acting in this role. A new head of mathematics and science has been appointed.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The acting headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher, is providing highly ambitious and effective leadership. There is a universally shared and understood view that the school is determined to provide students with an outstanding education. This aim is at the heart of all planning and decision making. As a result of this clear and focused approach, school leaders and the highly skilled and knowledgeable management committee have successfully secured improvements against all the areas identified at the inspection of June 2013.

The management committee provides effective governance and delivers a strong steer for school improvement. The committee is structured and organised to ensure statutory duties are fulfilled and that the school's strengths and areas for improvement are well known. Minutes of meetings indicate plentiful robust debate regarding decisions about planning, staffing and spending. Reports from senior leaders to the management committee are comprehensive and regularly questioned. Leaders are held thoroughly to account for ensuing improvements in teaching and in students' achievement. The management committee has ensured a sense of stability and continuing focus on improvement, despite significant organisational changes.

The quality of teaching has improved and students are making better progress than previously. This has been achieved through specific, shared expectations of teachers, tenacious recruitment of staff, robust challenge of weaker performance and precisely tailored packages of support for teachers at all levels. All staff set high

standards for students' behaviour, learning and attendance. Without exception, staff model positive and respectful relationships with each other and with the students. The atmosphere in school combines a sense of purpose with excitement for learning. Students are well motivated and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, towards the staff and each other. Lessons move at a good pace. Teachers routinely check students' progress during the course of lessons and ensure any misunderstandings are quickly clarified. Staff know exactly which students are entitled to additional pupil premium funding and the types of support that are most successful. The progress of all individuals and groups is closely tracked and analysed. Data demonstrate that, throughout the school, students' achievement in English and mathematics is improving. Gaps between those entitled to pupil premium funding and their peers have been reduced.

Attendance at school is afforded a high profile. Students, parents and staff understand the impact of good attendance and punctuality on learning. There is a clear expectation upon students and their families that students will attend every day unless too unwell. Relationships with families have been strengthened. Where parents and carers struggle to get their child into school, additional advice and support are readily provided. The current attendance of each individual student is on display. A healthy sense of competition exists about who is at the top of this list! Many strategies have been employed to encourage students to attend well. Examples of these include more vulnerable students being escorted to school by staff, a free breakfast club offering a range of enticing breakfast foods and drinks, and regular prizes for good or improved attendance. Whilst attendance remains lower than the average for most secondary schools, it has improved. When compared only with similar schools, attendance rates are very favourable.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- School leaders, the management committee and the local authority work effectively together to bring about improvement.
- Skilful recruitment ensures staff possess both subject expertise and strong behaviour management skills. Teachers and support staff work in excellent partnership.
- Evaluations of progress against the areas identified for improvement are regular, honest and accurate. Data analysis is comprehensive and forms a basis for further improvement planning.
- A positive atmosphere of high expectation abounds. The school is well presented, with inspirational photographs of students achieving success on display.
- Students are motivated by the many opportunities to participate in events and trips, such as participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme or representing the school at the Medway Youth Forum.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The curriculum does not make explicit enough provision for aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, personal, social and health education or religious education.
- The good rates of progress secured in English and mathematics have not been consistent in all other subject areas.

External support

The support and challenge from the local authority have been well received by the school and proportionate to need. Advice and guidance are of high quality and make a direct contribution to improvement. The local authority action plan has been reviewed and strengthened and is clear about actions to be taken, timeframes and responsibilities. Close contact with the school has been maintained, despite some changes to local authority staffing. The local authority is aware of improvements secured to leadership, the curriculum and achievement as well as the school's current priorities.