

11 December 2018

Mr William Carpenter
Executive headteacher
The Springfield Centre
Pontefract Road
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF4 1LL

Dear Mr Carpenter

Short inspection of The Springfield Centre

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 2018 with Gina White, HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Yours is a school that is undergoing significant change. Your plans are designed to ensure that you can better meet the needs of the pupils in your care and also increase the number of pupils that you can support. Building work is underway. The recent reorganisation of your teaching sites across the area is helping you to tailor the specific programmes on offer to meet individual pupils' needs. You can see the need within the locality for your provision and want to support more pupils by increasing capacity at your school.

You were clear in explaining to inspectors that this academic year is one of transition. As such, and in order to streamline processes this year, some members of the management committee and senior leadership team have changed their main responsibilities, in line with current developments. Operationally, this is working well. However, you agree with inspectors that new systems and structures that you and the management committee are using to evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching are not embedded. They have had limited impact so far. I recognise your vision to develop provision across teaching sites. I also understand the logic in how staffing responsibilities have been rearranged. Your desire to give the pupils in your care 'opportunities to succeed across the day' and to ensure that 'each day is a fresh start' is commendable.

Teaching at your school is characterised by a relatively strong focus on learning on the part of the pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well. They are successful in avoiding unnecessary conflict or situations that will trigger a negative reaction at school. Pupils try hard in lessons and adults support them well, pastorally. However, their level of oracy and literacy sometimes has a limiting effect on how well they do in lessons and over time. You agree that the progress that pupils make and the standards that they reach in literacy and oracy are too low.

Your vision, to shape the curriculum on offer within the different sites on which the school operates, is strong. In practice, what your pupils study is increasingly well matched to their interests and needs. For example, the flexibility in how subjects are taught, as observed in the Hill Top Centre, helped pupils stay focused on the task in hand. Superb questioning by a teacher was seen in this setting, when describing push and pull factors within the context of migration between the Americas. Pupils remained focused, because of the way in which teaching was delivered. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoyed most of the subjects that they study. Inspectors noted the strength of the personal, social and health education curriculum. Here, you focus on the importance of positive relationships and staying healthy.

Inspectors also judge that your transition programme is effective. Here, pupils spend two weeks, when they arrive at your school, getting used to systems and protocols. They are also able to show you the standard at which they are working when they arrive. As they integrate into classrooms, they do so in a structured way and are immediately focused on their work as a result of the transition process. Inspectors saw this success first-hand.

One of your senior colleagues has developed a new system of tracking the progress that pupils are making at one of the sites at which your school operates. This system not only raises expectations of what pupils can achieve, but it also allows pupils to see precisely how well they are progressing. It is helpful for parents too. You agree with inspectors that this system is having a positive impact on pupils on that site. You can also see how this can help you to accurately identify where pupils could make more progress. You are planning to roll this system out across the school.

You are committed to staff development. You have a keen eye on the strengths of your staff and want to see them develop and progress. Middle leaders are increasingly effective. Your staff development programmes are appreciated by your staff team.

Together with other school leaders, you have been successful in addressing areas for improvement that were highlighted in the previous inspection. Your focus, for example, on the curriculum that is on offer for the most able pupils has been effective. You are aware, however, that there is currently too much variation in the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils in your care.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your colleagues with responsibility for safeguarding have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They have also ensured that staff have received the latest required safeguarding training. You are aware that several of your pupils are vulnerable. Your communication with outside services is strong and you are tenacious in making sure that pupils receive the support that they require. Paperwork is well ordered and up to date. During their induction, new pupils focus on the 'top 10 tips' to help them stay safe. Pupils who inspectors spoke to said that they feel safe at school.

Your focus on the well-being and personal development of pupils is palpable. Pupils appreciate the system of rewards and sanctions. One said that, 'It helps you want to work more during the day.' Pupils also appreciate the work of their mentors who help them to focus on learning across the course of the week. They also told inspectors that teachers help them learn how to resist peer pressure and to have respect for other pupils and adults. One pupil said that she has learned to 'spot prejudices and challenge them'. Pupils told inspectors that there was no bullying at school. They are increasingly confident in themselves and the majority enjoy school.

Rates of attendance are improving. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing. This is due, in part, to the work of those colleagues responsible for attendance at school. However, you agree that there is still work to do to improve rates of attendance. As a result of the increasing levels of respect between pupils and teachers, the number of days lost because of fixed-term exclusion is continuing to decline. Inspectors noticed that there is a need to ensure that pupils who are on part-time timetables return to full-time education more quickly. You too have already noticed this. Consequently, plans are in place for a more strategic approach to this area of school life.

School policies, staff training, the respectful school community and curriculum coverage all help to ensure that pupils are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection, I wanted to find out the extent to which the needs of most-able pupils are being met. Inspectors noted that the progress that these pupils make is varied. Sometimes, weak attendance has a negative impact on pupils' progress. At other times, expectations of what these pupils can achieve are too low. Exercise books show that pupils sometimes tread water, rather than delve more deeply into concepts or topics. Nonetheless, some pupils were seen to be listening carefully to teachers' explanations and responding well to questioning that helped to move their thinking on. On other occasions, teachers had planned activities that were very engaging. Pupils were being guided to make links to other areas of learning or life experience. In science, for example, pupils were learning about chemicals that are used around the house in a lively and interesting way.
- The number and range of external qualifications on offer to Year 11 pupils has

increased markedly over the past three years. Pupils now have the opportunity to study a wider range of subjects that result in accreditation. What is more, you and other leaders have ensured that expectations have been raised. You avoid easier qualifications and push pupils to attain more highly. This has had reasonable success.

- I also wanted to find out to what extent provision at the school remains strong, given the major changes that are underway. My main finding was linked to the tracking of pupils' progress in this regard. Although some teaching is effective, lesson planning does not always match the needs and abilities of pupils well enough. Too often, teachers plan sessions that progress through portfolio qualifications, rather than offer real stretch from individuals' starting points. The new system, currently used in the South Elmsall, South Kirkby and Upton (SESKU) Centre to track pupils' progress, is having a strong impact on these pupils' progress, however.
- The teaching of mathematics is relatively effective at your school. Here, teachers identify what skills and knowledge individual pupils are struggling with. They then attempt to plug these gaps in subsequent lessons. As a result, the activities that are planned for the pupils match their current understanding to a greater extent.
- The support that you offer pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not good enough. The system for identifying any additional needs that pupils have is not strong. In addition, the system to check the effectiveness of any additional support given needs to improve. As a result of weaknesses in these systems, targets that pupils who have SEND are given are too generic. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to give pupils the therapeutic or academic support that they need. There is no clear 'line of sight' between these pupils' plans and the provision that they receive in lessons.
- One of my lines of questioning was to analyse the extent of pupils' support as they move into further education or the world of work after Year 11. You and your team are highly successful in this regard. Your focus on careers guidance at school is strong. You use contacts that you have within the management committee to help ensure that the vast majority of your pupils have plans after Year 11. This, combined with the impact of your personal development programmes at school, prepares pupils well for life after the Springfield Centre. However, you are also careful to track pupils after they have left you, to ensure that they remain successful in their future ventures. In this area of your work, you are having a very positive impact on the lives of the pupils in your care.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new structures being used to evaluate the quality of teaching and monitor it are fully embedded
- the system used to track pupils' progress in the SESKU Centre is rolled out across the school, so that pupils, parents and teachers can see exactly how much progress pupils are making and where improvements can be made
- rates of attendance continue to increase and that the proportion of pupils who

are persistently absent continues to decrease

- pupils studying part-time are supported to return to full-time education more quickly
- teaching matches the needs and abilities of pupils more closely and that teachers plan for pupils to make progress from their starting points more effectively
- pupils' oracy and literacy skills develop more quickly and that the standards that they reach improve
- the needs of pupils who have SEND are identified more sharply, that support given to them is more tailored and that expectations for how they will do are clearer.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we visited three sites on which pupils are educated at your school: the Springfield Centre, the SESKU Centre and the Hill Top Centre. At each site, inspectors observed learning, looked at files and exercise books and spoke to pupils and members of staff.

Inspectors met with you as executive headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. I spoke to two members of the management committee, including the chair. We met with middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding. A meeting was held with the special educational needs coordinator. We observed teaching and learning with members of the senior team and reviewed pupils' work from different year groups and from a variety of subjects. You presented the school development plan and information detailing pupils' progress and attainment. A variety of other documents were considered, including those relating to safeguarding and other policies on the school's website. There were no responses to the staff questionnaire or the pupil questionnaire. No parent or carer responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.