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Mrs Elaine Willett
Head of Out of Learning Service, Area A
Fletcher Place
North Mundham
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Dear Mrs Willett

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave myself and Andrew Lyons, additional inspector, when we inspected your school on 3 December 2009, and for the information which you provided before and during our visit. Please pass on our thanks to members of your staff and pupils who spoke with us during the day.

Out of Learning Service Area A will be amalgamated with Area B in January 2010 to become The Links College (South). The current acting head of Area A will become the head of the new amalgamated service. A new head of centre of the Chichester pupil referral unit was appointed in April 2009.

As a result of the inspection on 2 and 3 December 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to ensure it is better matched to their individual needs
- improve the effectiveness of pupils' individual targets, by ensuring they show pupils how to improve, and make certain all teachers use them to improve pupils' achievement
- build upon the good work already started to ensure that all pupils attend the pupil referral unit regularly.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements, and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment is low but given pupils' starting points this represents good progress for the majority. In 2009, pupils left having gained a range of GCSE grades and almost all those who were entered achieved accreditation in adult literacy and numeracy. Current data provided by the service show that pupils are continuing to make good progress. This is reflected, for instance, in the gains that primary pupils in the

September 2009



Branch class are making in their literacy skills. It can also be seen in the progress that pupils at the 39 Club are making in mathematics and science. These positive outcomes are directly related to good teaching and more effective use of assessment.

The priority being given by the service to raising levels of pupil attendance is having a positive impact for the majority of the pupils. While attendance rates for last year show an improving trend, they fell slightly short of target and remain low when compared with national expectations. Crucially, the majority make very good progress in improving their attendance, and some, such as those attending the primary unit, have high attendance levels. The attendance of a minority of pupils whose attendance has not yet improved remains a concern, particularly some who are attending the local college. Rigorous systems are in place to analyse attendance data and follow up absence. However, individual education plans and reviews do not make a sufficiently strong link between a pupil's attendance targets and the progress they are making with their learning.

The staff are skilled at forging positive relationships with the pupils, and this was reflected in pupils' good behaviour during lessons and their positive attitudes to learning. Exclusions rose slightly during the last year, but with the exception of some pupils attending the college, there have only been a few days lost to exclusion since September across the service. Systems for target setting and review in relation to learning skills and behaviour for learning provide an increasingly effective framework for pupils. Pupils know how well they are doing and staff can quickly identify any pupil who is at risk of not making expected progress. They can draw on a wide range of interventions, with good support from other agencies, to get the pupil back on track.

The emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning is paying dividends. The local authority has provided valued and effective support in this regard. Observations carried out during the inspection support the service's evaluation that teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teaching is characterised by very good relationships between the pupils, their teachers and teaching assistants, underpinned by mutual respect. Good progress has been made in the use of assessment and as a result, teachers use their accurate knowledge of pupils' circumstances and progress to plan a suitable range of practical activities. There is use of questioning, targets and written feedback to extend pupils' understanding and enable them to make good progress in their learning. Staff's use of praise increases pupils' confidence in their learning. In the primary lesson, pupils were given good opportunities to share with each other their progress and to assess how well they had done in a literacy lesson.

There have been positive developments in the curriculum, which is becoming more personalised to meet the needs of the pupils. The steps being taken to broaden the range of alternative accreditation routes in science exemplify this. Leaders rightly identify that aspects of the curriculum, such as the development of cross-curricular

functional skills, are still at a relatively early stage. There are limited opportunities for those attending the 39 Club to partake in physical activity. All those who have been permanently excluded can access full-time provision. However, there are a few instances where the service cannot fully meet the entitlement of pupils with special educational needs. The strong focus on developing a skills-based curriculum and the quality of guidance and support is reflected in the increasing success that the service has in helping pupils return to mainstream schooling. All of the pupils who left in 2009 went on to education, training or employment. Given their starting points, this is a significant achievement and testament to the quality of the care, guidance and support pupils receive and their own positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders and managers show a strong determination to sustain improvement and this is reflected in performance across the service since the last inspection. It is particularly evident in the steps taken by the service to improve the quality of teaching and assessment and the consequent impact this is having on the learning and progress of the pupils. The head's passion and vision are at the heart of this drive and her strategic leadership and vigour are shared by other managers and staff. The management committee continues to be a strength and this is reflected in the quality of its support and the searching questions it regularly asks about performance. The service is data rich and this enables its leaders and managers to have an accurate understanding of performance, tackle areas of relative weakness, target professional development opportunities and to plan in a considered way. Leaders are acutely aware that the imminent amalgamation of the Area A and Area B will be a challenge, but are confident, with good reason, that the building blocks that are in place will provide a solid platform for the trend of improvement to continue.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector