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Mr Terry Dixon  
Acting Headteacher  
Unity Learning Centre  
Forest Road West  
Nottingham  
NG7 4ES

Dear Mr Dixon

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 June 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Thank you also to the chair of the management committee and the local authority Head of Inclusive Learning who spent time talking to me.

At the time of the visit, only Year 11 students sitting GCSE mathematics were attending the centre. There is currently no deputy headteacher.

As a result of the inspection on 11 June 2010, the school was asked to strengthen its capacity for further improvement by using all available information effectively to evaluate the outcomes for students. It was also asked to improve teaching and learning, raise the students' rate of attendance and secure greater stability in staffing by the beginning of the summer term.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that, at this time, the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

A third of Year 11 pupils are sitting both English and mathematics GCSE examinations. Around 10% are expected to reach Grade C or better in mathematics and 12% in English. Although these figures appear low, given the previous difficult histories of the students, this represents reasonable progress. There are clear records and analysis by groups of students to show their learning pathways and achievement in gaining Level 1 and 2 qualifications. Additionally, the vocational elements of the provision are successfully supporting over 80% of the students into further training and employment.

Students' attendance has improved. Published information remains well below national figures for secondary schools. Nevertheless, when the recorded data over the induction period, of necessity gradual for many students, is removed, the figures are close to 90%. There has been a marked improvement in the attendance of those with previously persistent absence. Students attribute their more regular attendance to the way the centre treats them as individuals and provides them with worthwhile experiences. Generally, attendance is better at the centre than at off-site provisions, although there is considerable variability in students' response to the differing provisions. The centre has not embedded fully systems to track the students' punctuality to either the centre or the off-site provision but recognises this as a next step.

Robust internal evaluations of the impact of teaching on learning show steady improvement in the way adults, including teaching assistants, support learning and behaviour in lessons. The centre has confirmed the accuracy of its self-evaluation through external support from the local authority. Staff regularly plan clearly for what they want the students to know and understand by the end of the lesson and routinely share the information with students. These findings were confirmed by the lessons seen during the monitoring visit. Teaching is satisfactory, with the development needs of staff carefully met through targeted training.

The capacity of the centre to improve rapidly has been strengthened through the better analysis of the students' outcomes, the more carefully targeted improvement plan and through the greater involvement of the many stakeholders, including secondary headteachers in the area. Circumstances within the local authority have hindered the appointment of permanent staff to the centre. To date, six permanent staff have been appointed and the remaining permanent posts are being processed throughout the rest of the term. A substantive headteacher has been appointed for September the recruitment process for a deputy headteacher is well underway. Although several of the staff are temporary, they have remained at the centre for the academic year. Students have thus experienced stability in their relationships with teachers.

The local authority action plan has been amended to include arrangements to inform parents and carers about plans for the school and how their views will be taken into account. It is now satisfactory. The support provided has had a positive impact and is helping to strengthen the capacity of the centre to sustain improvement.

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

Sheila Nolan  
Additional Inspector