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Judith Sherington
Headteacher
The Attic
The Attic Learning Centre
Lovewell Road
Lowestoft
NR33 0RQ

Dear Ms Sherington

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Attic

Following my visit to your centre on 26 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 first monitoring inspection since the centre was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the acting lead teacher of The Walpole Learning Centre, the Chair of the Management Committee and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The centre's development plan was evaluated. An opportunity to walk the Walpole Learning Centre with you, and The Attic Learning Centre with your deputy headteacher enabled me to see students at work in lessons. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including a sample of students' work.

Context

Currently, eight students are taught at the Walpole Learning Centre. Twenty five are taught at The Attic Learning Centre. Interviews to appoint a substantive lead teacher of the Walpole Learning Centre will be held later this term. Since the last inspection, a new Chair of the Management Committee has been appointed.

Main findings

You have responded promptly to the issues raised in the last inspection. Development plans have been updated to prioritise the main areas identified for improvement. These plans include targets and timescales which you are beginning to use to evaluate the impact you and your staff are having on securing improvements.

Staff training has taken place to strengthen the quality of teaching on both sites. A new marking policy is in place but it is not firmly embedded. Scrutinising a small sample of books showed that in English, marking is regular and provides good quality feedback to students, particularly in their extended writing. It is not correcting basic errors in their spelling and grammar. Marking is less frequent in mathematics and does not tell students what they can do to improve their work.

You have linked each of your teaching assistants with a teacher to help them develop the skills they need to support students' learning more effectively. Teaching assistants have been trained to provide individual students with short, daily support sessions to promote their reading, speaking and listening skills. Currently, students' work in these sessions shows that there are few opportunities to write a length and that some students remain too dependent on staff to complete work for them.

Teachers and teaching assistants have been set new targets to enable you to manage their performance. Regular observations of lessons are providing you with a clearer overview of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and its impact on learning. Some ineffective teaching remains. This is being managed appropriately.

Assessment data is shared each half-term with teachers to indicate students' prior learning and the targets they are expected to attain in each subject. Data shows that currently, a higher proportion of students are making or exceeding expected progress in mathematics compared with English or science. You feel that by the time the next round of assessments are made, data will show that larger proportions of students are making improved progress in all subjects.

Attendance remains low. Warning notices and fines administered to parents, and monitoring by key workers and an education welfare officer have led to some improvements, but your current data shows that a quarter of students are regularly absent from the centre. You and the Chair of the Management Committee acknowledge that attendance must rise significantly if the centre is to be judged

good at its next inspection. You are investigating potential links with other providers and local businesses to provide additional opportunities to study vocational awards off- site.

Teachers have assumed responsibility for leading English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education and humanities. They have been given time to lead staff training and to meet with you to evaluate the impact they are having. Their ability to lead and manage improvements in their subjects forms part of the procedures to manage their performance.

The Management Committee shares your ambitions to improve provision and ensure that all students gain the basic qualifications needed for the next stage of their education, training or the workplace. They have contributed to improvement planning and know what needs to be done to make the centre a good one. Action is being taken to recruit new members. A safeguarding audit has been completed to ensure that students in the centre are kept safe.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the centre until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You value the support provided by the local authority to refurbish the building, including a new science laboratory and to improve teaching resources. Training provided for staff this term, and the specialist support given to you to resolve staffing issues have been effective.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Management Committee and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy