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Mr Daniel O'Donovan
Senior Head of Centre
South Derbyshire Support Centre
Memorial Hall
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Dear Mr O'Donovan

Short inspection of South Derbyshire Support Centre

Following my visit to the centre on 24 November 2015 with Caroline Oliver, Ofsted Inspector, 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 centre was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the centre since the last inspection. You have continued to improve the behaviour and emotional well-being of pupils extremely well. Due to the effective way in which you prepare pupils for the next stage of their education, most pupils are successful on their return to mainstream school. There is a mixture of pupils accessing the centre on a part-time and full-time basis for varying lengths of time. You take well-informed decisions about the length of placements in collaboration with mainstream schools and families.

At the time of the previous inspection, two areas for improvement were identified: to improve primary pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills and to monitor the centre's work in reducing exclusions from schools. Useful information is now collected from referring schools about all pupils' attainments in literacy and numeracy. All pupils also undertake an initial assessment at the centre which is used to inform the planning of learning activities by staff. Regular assessment of pupils' work demonstrates that pupils make good progress while at the centre.

In your role as senior head of centre you are a key member on the panel of professionals which supports schools in the area to reduce exclusions. Senior leaders from local schools report that the centre plays a significant role in reducing exclusions in the area. These leaders appreciate the flexibility of the centre in

meeting the needs of pupils and this work helps to improve the long-term outcomes for them.

Teaching is good. The staff team take into account the prior achievement of pupils when planning lessons. Staff expect work to be completed to a high standard and within the timescales they set. They know the pupils very well and as a result they know when to further challenge the pupils to achieve their potential.

The centre is successful at improving the attendance of many pupils by working closely with mainstream schools and families. Leaders recognise that there is further work to be done to improve the attendance of some pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and the management committee take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. The recently reviewed safeguarding policy is a good-quality document which directly informs effective practice. All staff receive appropriate training so that they know how to respond to situations in order to keep pupils safe. A strong feature of the centre's safeguarding work is how effectively you work with each pupil's school to share information and ensure that any concerns are addressed. Your good links with social care, the police and other local support services means pupils are surrounded by a network of people to help keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and the management committee have an accurate understanding about the quality of the centre's work. The management committee and head of provision oversee the work of three support centres across Derbyshire. They are starting to share effective practice across the centres. This work is enhancing the progress made by pupils. The management committee collects useful information about South Derbyshire Support Centre through reports provided to its regular meetings and visits by members of the committee to the site. The information they collect informs the questioning they provide, which results in improvements to the centre. The centre's improvement plan clearly sets out the next stages of development but the plan would benefit from being more specific about when actions are to be completed. You demonstrate a strong commitment to providing a service which supports pupils to be successful on their return to mainstream education. You have created a culture where pupils and staff feel valued and cared for. You are well respected by pupils, staff, parents and senior staff at local schools.
- You, teachers and teaching assistants support each other to deliver effective lessons across a range of subjects. Pupils told inspectors that their work is set at the right level and if they finish work they are always given more to do. The small-group and individual teaching that pupils get means that they receive constant feedback about their work. This attention to detail means that pupils are clear about the progress they are making and any underachievement is immediately addressed.

- Positive changes to the challenging behaviour of pupils happen quickly because staff have excellent relationships with them. Pupils are clear about the system for rewarding good behaviour and sanctioning poor behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that the systems work and their behaviour improves as a result. School leaders from local schools described to inspectors how the behaviour of pupils improves on return to their schools. The pupils are far more settled in lessons and during social times. As a result, the progress they make improves. Staff are well trained in the management of negative behaviours. The use of physical intervention by staff is rare because the staff are able to defuse potentially volatile situations by other means. Members of staff told inspectors that they felt confident to deal with any challenging behaviour pupils display because they receive good-quality training and are well supported by you.
- Since the last inspection the centre has developed provision for Year 10 and Year 11 students in collaboration with local schools. Pupils are successful in gaining a range of GCSE qualifications at the centre. Alternative provision is used for part of the week to enhance the education on offer to some students. Leaders closely monitor behaviour, attendance and progress of students accessing these alternative provisions.
- The centre is highly valued by local schools because it is an effective resource which prevents the permanent exclusion of pupils. Parents spoken to during the inspection also valued the provision. 'We don't know what we would have done without the centre, they cater for our son's needs so well,' was a quote typical of comments inspectors heard throughout the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all actions in the centre improvement plan are measurable and include a specific timescale for completion
- the attendance of pupils is improved.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Harrison
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we held meetings with you and the head of provision. I had telephone conversations with a member of the management committee, a representative from the local authority and senior staff from local secondary schools. Inspectors visited all classrooms to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. We spoke with parents and pupils about their experiences of the centre. I evaluated reports containing information about pupils' progress over the last 12 months, the centre self-evaluation and the centre improvement plan. I also reviewed documentation and records about how you keep pupils safe.