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21 January 2014

Ms Elaine Dwyer
Headteacher
Clifford Holroyde Specialist SEN College
Thingwall Lane
Knotty Ash
Liverpool
Merseyside
L14 7NX

Dear Ms Dwyer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Clifford Holroyde Specialist SEN College, Liverpool

Following my visit to your school on 20 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- further refine the schools' action plan by making a clear link between the actions taken by the school and improvements in students' progress.
- manage effectively the admission of new students so that it is no longer a barrier to the rapid and sustained improvement of the school. Work in conjunction with the local authority to ensure the start dates of new students are staggered rather than en masse. Ensure planning, by the school, for the admission of new students includes an opportunity for new students to become familiar with the school before their start date.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and two teachers. I also met with three members of the governing body and two local authority officers to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. I also considered a range of information provided by the school. I visited classrooms to talk to students, observed them at work and to look at their books. I also met with a group of 5 students to gather their views on the school's progress.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school since the last inspection.

Main findings

School leaders have acted immediately to ensure the school is up and running in its quest to respond to the areas for improvement raised in the recent inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a cohesive team determined to take the school to good in the shortest time possible. By focussing on improving the quality of teaching as the key to improving students' rate of progress, leaders have also started to improve students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. Leaders have similarly acted quickly to bring safeguarding procedures up to an acceptable standard.

Training for teachers in how to improve their planning for lessons has resulted in better behaviour and improvement in the rate of progress students now make. The quick action of establishing a clear whole school policy for planning lessons, along with the sharing of good practice already seen in the school, has been effective in ensuring groups of students, particularly the more able, are suitably challenged. More students work at and achieve the levels they are capable of. Consequently, an increased sense of self-esteem has led to improvements in behaviour by students in lessons.

The contributions of learning support assistants are also having a positive impact on raising the quality of students' learning. Some simple but effective steps have been taken to ensure learning support assistants are now in a position to support students' learning rather than just their behaviour. Teachers share their weekly planning for lessons with learning support assistants. Learning support assistants are directed effectively in how they can support students with their learning in each subject. Accordingly, learning support assistants were observed in lessons giving support to students which was directly related to the subject being taught. Additional plans are in place to extend training for learning support assistants so that they are more effective in supporting students with differing levels of ability.

Leaders have taken swift and effective action to ensure all students are safe while on roll at the school. The headteacher has visited all providers of alternative provision (centres where students attend as an alternative to school) in order to confirm appropriate health and safety procedures are in place. Robust systems enable school staff to record accurately the attendance of students at alternative provision. These systems also enable school staff to contact appropriate adults quickly when students are absent from their placement. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of the actions taken by school staff to ensure the safety of students attending alternative provisions by regularly checking staffs' records and by carrying out visits to the provisions. As a result leaders are rightly confident that students are both safe and looked after well when attending an alternative provision.

Improvement in behaviour, demonstrated by a reduction of the occurrence of serious incidents, seen at the last inspection, has continued. However, although plans are in place to ensure the admission of new students into the school do not once again adversely impact on the behaviour and progress of those already in the school, they are yet to be fully implemented. Leaders plan to work closely with feeder schools to ensure new students arrive at Clifford Holroyde Specialist SEN College well prepared for the next stage of their education. This plan should be supported through a commitment from the local authority to ensure only a small number of new students are allowed to start at any one time.

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

External support

School leaders are making effective use of a range of external support. By making use of external consultants to deliver training in behaviour management and safeguarding, leaders have already demonstrated a commitment to improving the way the school works in these areas. Other consultants have been employed to support leaders in successfully targeting improvements in teaching as a means of boosting pupil progress, for instance by providing training for teachers around how they plan for lessons. The support already provided, along with that planned, by the local authority is pivotal in improving leadership and management of the school. Additional support planned by the local authority includes: an increase in the number of support days to be provided by a school improvement partner to challenge leaders around the impact of their actions on improving the rate of progress made by students; support from an educational welfare officer to assist with the monitoring of alternative providers; support from the local authority safeguarding officer in advising the governing body in reviewing its' role, particularly around the safeguarding of students.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector