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9 March 2015

Ms Linda Bennion  
Headteacher  
The Nexus Education Centre  
Lydney Road  
Flixton  
Manchester  
M41 8RN

Dear Ms Bennion

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Nexus Education Centre, Trafford**

Following my visit to your school on 6 March 2015, 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 school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 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. The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the action plan by giving specific detail about what success will look like, so that leaders can judge unambiguously the impact of their actions on improving the outcomes of all pupils in the school
- work urgently with mainstream schools to put a robust system in place to ensure The Nexus Education Centre has a detailed and accurate understanding of the specific needs of each student before he or she is placed at the centre.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher along with the interim executive headteacher, teachers, students, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last

inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I also observed learning taking place and scrutinised a sample of students' work along with a range of documents provided by the school. I took account the views of parents given in a survey which was conducted by the school on the day before my visit.

## **Context**

Following a reorganisation of local authority's pupil referral units a permanent executive headteacher has been appointed with effect from April 2015. The executive headteacher will have leadership oversight of the Nexus Education Centre and Trafford Medical Education Service.

Leaders have appointed a site manager, a teaching assistant and a part-time office administrator to fill vacancies on a permanent basis. A temporary teaching assistant has also been appointed to cover a temporary vacancy.

## **Main findings**

There is no doubt that the centre has moved quickly and effectively to ensure the building blocks for improvement are in place. Leaders have worked well with a similar outstanding school, from outside the local authority, in order to begin to develop a system to track the progress of all students. Teachers are working as a team to implement a strategy to boost students' literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum. As a result of the changes already made, students' attitudes to learning are showing signs of improvement. For example, the number of serious incidents has reduced to a third of what it was before the inspection and attendance overall, while still below average, has increased by five percentage points this term.

Leaders have worked swiftly to produce an improvement plan which gives an accurate overview of the actions required to address the main areas for improvement. However, not enough of the actions identified are linked to clear statements of the intended impact on students' outcomes. Also, dates by which actions should be completed are not specific. Consequently, leaders do not have well defined measures to judge success. Leaders are therefore not yet able to judge accurately how quickly the school is progressing.

Teachers are beginning to use well the information they have about the specific needs of students placed at the school. For example, my scrutiny of documents provided by the centre showed how a mathematics teacher planned to close the gaps in learning of up to five students each working on a different topic in one mathematics lesson. The students spoken with, quite rightly felt that working on aspects which are important to the students is helping them keep up with their peers in mainstream schools. However, too often leaders do not receive good quality information about the specific needs of students before they are placed at the school. This wastes valuable time at the beginning of a student's placement and

therefore, is a hindrance to the progress of many students and to the school as a whole.

Leaders have begun to take appropriate action to improve the teaching of basic literacy skills across the school. Leaders' plans to develop a whole school strategy to broaden students' vocabulary in all subjects and to encourage students' to write in greater detail are beginning to pay dividends. The students spoken with feel that 'word mats', which give examples of words and sentences, remind them of the expectations of teachers, give students pointers on how to present their work and help them with key words in different subjects. One student said that he was now able to 'get on quicker' than before the inspection because he did not have to wait for adult support. This is an example of good progress.

### **External support**

Leaders are using effectively their links with the local authority. Good links with the local authority have been instrumental in the appointment of a permanent executive headteacher. Additional financial support given by the local authority has enabled the work of the interim executive headteacher to continue at the school until July 2015.

Leaders have established strong links with the interim executive headteacher's own school. Support from this outstanding school, which is similar in nature to The Nexus Education Centre, has enabled leaders to begin to develop an effective system to track progress.

Links with local mainstream secondary schools are strong. Students benefit from being set work by their mainstream schools, to complete at The Nexus Education Centre. Students also benefit from the frequent visits to the school by a small number of teachers from their mainstream schools and also from the sharing of specialist equipment, for example in science, which would otherwise be unavailable at Nexus. These actions ensure students get the support they need to keep up with their peers in their mainstream schools.

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

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Trafford and as below.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority