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Mr Robert Hewson
Headteacher
Gillford Centre
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Dear Mr Hewson

Short inspection of Gillford Centre

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017 with Bernard Robinson, 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 school was judged to be good in February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team are determined to give pupils an education which helps them to regain their confidence and self-esteem and to get back on track to learn and achieve. Through your regular visits to lessons and teaching when needed, you keep yourself fully aware of the challenges staff face and also overcome. In doing so you know how best to support and encourage staff.

You have an experienced and expert team of staff. Many have additional qualifications in teaching children with social and emotional behavioural difficulties. One of your senior team is a specialist leader in education. Good use is made of these skills, supporting the schools where your pupils continue to attend part time.

The consistency of good practice across key stages 1 to 4 and the hospital and home tuition service is very evident. The primary coordinator is particularly strong in raising the quality of teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2. Through focused monitoring and evaluation of practice, she identifies challenging targets which lead to further improvements. Best practice is shared with other leaders. This is something the school was asked to do at the previous inspection.

There are very effective systems in place to get to know pupils when they join the Gillford Centre. Time is taken to identify what pupils know and what is needed to help them improve their emotional well-being and behaviour. There are good systems in place to assess pupils' academic ability and their potential. This is

helping staff to go on to check the progress that pupils make. The evidence of these checks shows that pupils make good academic progress; proof of this can be seen in the pupils' workbooks.

When visiting classrooms and the workshops, we were very impressed to see the skilful way staff helped pupils to learn. Whether it was a question about similes in a primary lesson, or one about engineering in the key stage 4 vocational lesson, the ability of staff to encourage pupils to think and 'have a go' was very effective. Staff are acutely aware of the emotional needs of pupils. Staff create calm and purposeful lessons, working together effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements and the quality of any related record-keeping are effective. The necessary checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are undertaken. Staff work well with social workers and health professionals. Regular feedback at staff meetings ensure that any safeguarding concerns are discussed and appropriate action agreed.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly, from just under 50 to almost 90 pupils. One of the reasons for the increase is the high numbers of key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools. The increased numbers have put extra pressure on the centre. However, you and your staff have risen to the challenge and ensure that pupils settle very quickly and receive a good education.
- During this inspection there was a focus on the curriculum. The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and science, which is helping pupils to improve their basic skills. For those pupils who attend the Gillford Centre part time because they continue to attend another school, or for those that have home tuition, the work they are given is carefully managed. This oversight of their work ensures that they study an appropriate range of subjects. For older pupils the content of their examination courses is covered.
- Key stage 4 pupils have the opportunity to study vocational courses including engineering, catering and land based operations. These courses engage pupils in learning and help them to prepare for further education. One past pupil went on to study agricultural engineering at a local college. Residential trips and outdoor education are appreciated by all pupils. During the day of the inspection a group went rock climbing. There is much to celebrate about the curriculum on offer. However, it is noticeable that pupils do not get a chance to have music lessons in key stage 3 and religious education is not a strong feature.
- In discussions with your senior leaders, convincing evidence was provided that answered the questions I had about pupils' behaviour and attendance. The evidence clearly shows that pupils' behaviour and attendance improves significantly when they join the Gillford Centre. There are two key reasons for

these improvements: a culture of rewarding good behaviour and attendance and pupils' appreciation of the opportunities they are given to learn. The high attendance at vocational lessons, for example, is evidence of how the curriculum motivates pupils to attend, behave and achieve.

- At the previous inspection the management committee and local authority were asked to be clearer about their roles in challenging school leaders. There is some evidence that the management committee holds leaders to account. However, the management committee does not always evaluate pupils' progress at their meetings and has never asked how well children looked after do. Members of the management committee are understandably keen to be involved in the current review of alternative provision in Cumbria. However, they have allowed this to take them away from checking that information on the school's website is updated and meets requirements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they review the curriculum for key stage 3 and 4 to ensure that it gives pupils experience of the full range of subjects
- pupils' academic progress, attendance and behaviour are reported on and discussed at all management committee meetings. Particular reference should be made to the outcomes for looked after children and the effectiveness of the personal education plans and support of the virtual school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the director of children's services for Cumbria and the regional schools commissioner. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- An inspector met with senior leaders and with two members of the management board.
- Inspectors visited all of the school's sites and visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. We also observed pupils around the different sites during the school day.
- Inspectors had lunch in the dining hall with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff.
- There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey, so inspectors spoke informally to pupils during the school day.

- Inspectors looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation and action plan as well as a range of other documentation.
- Inspectors conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.