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25 January 2013

Ms E Shaw
Headteacher
Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit
Harold Street
Grimsby
DN32 7NQ

Dear Ms Shaw

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit

Following my visit to your school on 25 January 2013, 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the Headteacher, a representative from the management committee and a representative from the local authority's strategic partner for school improvement. The school development plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, a class teacher has been appointed to teach the Key Stage 2 class. Two Key Stage 3 class teachers and a higher level teaching assistant in the Key Stage 2 class are absent. Currently the unit has six supply staff covering vacancies and absences.

Main findings

The draft development plan addresses the areas for improvement following the recent section 5 inspection, however strategic aspects such as success criteria and detailed milestones are less clear and do not help the management committee to support and challenge as well as they could. The Headteacher has set in train a series of actions to support the unit during the current staffing situation that is hindering the units' improvement. She is making use of local schools and is using specialist external support to provide immediate support to new and temporary staff teaching English, mathematics and science. The headteacher's latest monitoring indicates that pupils are responding to developments; they are motivated and enjoying more interesting lessons. However these actions have yet to begin to accelerate pupils' progress. The solution to resolving the longer term situation of filling staff vacancies is not moving swiftly enough to accelerate the unit's improvement. The management committee are still getting to grips with their wider governance roles. They have ideas to develop their work but are not fully clear about their responsibilities and flexibilities to support and challenge the unit following the local authority's recent re-organisation of alternative provision and special educational needs.

Senior leaders and the management committee have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- improve the school plan so that success criteria reflect the impact that the actions are intended to have on the learning and progress of pupils on short term placements and those staying longer
- strengthen senior leadership and the quality of teaching by quickly filling the vacancy for a Key Stage 2 leader
- introduce new actions into the plan to support the development of governance by ensuring the management committee know how to exercise their freedoms, flexibilities and responsibilities to support and challenge the unit.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Specialist advice and guidance provided by the local authority's strategic partner for school improvement, is supporting the school with recruitment, and specialist mentor support for the headteacher. As a result temporary staff are in place to cover unfilled vacancies and absence and the headteacher's development of assessment, use of data and the drafting of the school plan is beginning to inform and develop practices on the Phoenix House site.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Management Committee and the Director of Children's Services for North East Lincolnshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Alan Nicholson - Chair of the Management Committee
- Director of Children's Services – North East Lincolnshire
- The lead inspector.