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Mrs Elisa Entwistle
Acting headteacher
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Dear Mrs Entwistle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School

Following my visit to your school on 30 September 2016, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the management committee are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

While progress is still being made, the pace of improvement is inhibited by the changes to senior leadership of alternative provision schools by the overall management committee with the support of the local authority. These changes affect your role as headteacher and senior leadership overall across the three Gloucestershire local authority maintained alternative provision schools. You took up your post shortly after the section 5 inspection in 2015. The three centres that make up Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School work with limited financial resources. For these reasons I recommend that the period between the

publication of the report on the March 2015 inspection and the re-inspection of the school is extended to 30 months. I also recommend that a further monitoring visit takes place given the ongoing changes in alternative provision within Gloucestershire.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other staff to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. No member of the management committee was available. The inspector toured the school with you to meet other staff and the pupils currently in the school to talk about their work. A number of documents were scrutinised and discussed.

Context

A reorganisation of alternative provision in Gloucestershire was instigated in April 2015 and the changes have continued. At this time, an executive headteacher and a management committee with oversight of all three maintained alternative provision schools in Gloucestershire took up their roles. The operational headteacher for Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School, responsible for the three centres that make up this provision, also took up her post at this time.

The executive headteacher who resigned in July 2016 has not been replaced. Your role changed in November 2015 from being operational, directed by the executive headteacher, to acting headteacher with a much wider set of responsibilities. There have also been changes in the leadership and significant changes in the staffing at each of the three centres since the first monitoring visit in July 2015.

Main findings

The main purpose of this alternative provision school is to support primary and secondary pupils permanently excluded from schools in this part of Gloucestershire, or those at high risk of permanent exclusion, to move on to a new school or provider. The school works well with a range of other providers to ensure that pupils, particularly those in key stage 4, have a curriculum that meets their needs well and prepares them for the next stage in their education or training. To achieve the overall purpose, further work has taken place on all of the areas noted in the letter following the first monitoring visit in July 2015. You have retained all of the strengths noted then. You provide strong leadership and clear direction to support staff in meeting this key purpose.

You have responded well to the recommendation made in the monitoring letter of 8 July 2015 to demonstrate the progress pupils make in their all-round personal development. There has been further refinement to the induction process used to accurately identify each pupil's starting points when they arrive at the school. This provides a secure baseline in reading, writing and mathematics as well as each

individual's emotional development and their own 'My profile'. This induction process is being integrated well with the new assessment and tracking system the school is developing. You know that there is still work to be done on the subject elements of this process. Although still in development, the school's 'BEST' model, linking pupils' skills development with their behaviour, effort and teamwork is a powerful means to monitor pupils' all-round development.

For many pupils, their very low levels of emotional development are a serious impediment to other aspects of their development. This is identified exceptionally well using the 'thrive approach' to enable appropriate and effective support to be provided for these pupils. You are making further improvements in being able to demonstrate the progress pupils make in their all-round personal, as well as their academic, development and the value you add while they are in the school. However, you are still sometimes inhibited in securing good progress for secondary pupils because of the lateness, limited amount or poor quality of information from the schools they previously attended.

Your analysis of the outcomes for older pupils has led to a comprehensive review of the curriculum, alongside the work you are doing to track pupils' progress better. You realise the importance of the personal, social and health education aspects of the curriculum as well as the need to ensure that pupils have the skills to progress successfully to the next stage in their education and/or training. Pupils are provided with a good range of opportunities, such as extensive work in art, to broaden their experiences, boost their self-confidence and self-esteem, and prepare them to move on. You realise that you could do more to track these older pupils after they leave you at the end of Year 11 to evaluate the success of what you did for them.

Currently there are six or seven pupils in Year 11 who have been in the school for periods of up to three years. These pupils have been identified as requiring more specialist provision, but none is currently available. This puts significant strain on the limited resources you have and on staff who have not been trained to work with these pupils. However, the work of the team that supports those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to be a strength of the school.

I was unable to speak with any members of the management committee. However, it is clear that the school's action plans identify accurately what still needs to be done. Under your leadership, it is clear how the further improvements required will be achieved.

External support

There have been significant changes to alternative provision within Gloucestershire and more are planned. Many academies within the local authority area have, or are planning, their own provision or linking with other schools. This often duplicates, rather than complements, provision within the Gloucestershire maintained

alternative provision schools. This makes strategic planning very difficult for your school. As far as you are aware, the local authority has not undertaken a strategic review of alternative provision across the county. In addition, the different roles of the alternative provision schools and specialist schools for pupils with particular needs are unclear. The pupils currently in Year 11 identified as requiring specialist provision and who have been in Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School for up to three years put a significant strain on the limited resources available.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector