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Miss Sam Stocken
Acting Headteacher
Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Alternative Provision School
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Dear Miss Stocken

Short inspection of Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Alternative Provision School

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 2018 with Jen Edwards, 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 January 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

After formally taking over the leadership of the school as acting headteacher earlier this year, you carefully reviewed many aspects of the school's work. This gave you an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement. You successfully appointed several new teachers and teaching assistants, replacing the regular need for temporary staff. By selecting senior leaders with the right mix of experience and enthusiasm, you now have a leadership team with good capacity to meet pupils' needs. The reorganisation of the management committee in January 2018, to oversee the governance of the school, is beginning to provide effective support to school leaders. Between them, members of the management committee have a very useful set of skills and knowledge that are relevant to the work of the school.

You have successfully overseen a change in the way that pupils' behaviour is managed so that pupils are encouraged to fully engage in learning. Staff are now keen to recognise why pupils behave as they do. This information is used to create a behaviour strategy for each pupil, which focuses on identifying early signs of upset or distress. By providing support at this point, there has been a general decline in behavioural incidents. When difficulties do occur, staff are becoming more skilled at

de-escalating the situation, sometimes by involving a different adult who has a particularly positive relationship with the pupil. Increasingly, staff encourage pupils to join in with restorative processes after a behavioural incident, in order for pupils to take more responsibility for their actions. These changes have been put in place recently and are beginning to create a more positive culture in lessons and social times.

From our visits to breakfast club and at breaktime, it is clear that pupils benefit from the relationships they have with the staff. In lessons, pupils engage well with the tasks they are set. One pupil explained how she was learning much more than she had in her last school because teachers talk to her about what she thinks and likes. They then use this information to plan work that she finds interesting. Although new assessment procedures have been put in place, teachers' judgements regarding the progress that pupils are making are not supported with examples of pupils' work. Therefore, leaders and the management committee do not have a secure understanding of the progress pupils make while attending school and offsite provision.

You are determined that learning is the main focus of the school's work. You have expanded the curriculum to include a good range of academic, creative and vocational subjects. Programmes are also in place to address pupils' social and emotional needs. When the school cannot meet all identified needs, it uses alternative providers. These include organisations that provide curriculum experiences such as car maintenance, construction work, outdoor education, or counselling and mentoring services. Leaders carefully monitor pupils' attendance and safety during these sessions. However, leaders have not ensured that what pupils learn while offsite is matched accurately to their needs and builds on the work they are doing in school. This was an area identified as requiring improvement at the previous inspection. Leaders have not addressed this effectively and, consequently, pupils' outcomes remain weaker in this area of the school's provision.

You have strengthened the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A new approach to setting targets to identify the next steps for progress has been established. However, this has not yet been implemented consistently across the school or communicated to alternative providers. A range of new short-term teaching interventions are being trialled to see how well they help pupils learn.

Since becoming acting headteacher, you have responded appropriately to support from the local authority. For example, working with a headteacher from a local special school on strengthening school improvement practices.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety and welfare of pupils is given a high priority by all staff. The new online system supports the recording, reporting and tracking of any safeguarding concerns very well. Leaders are using this approach to carefully check that pupils are being kept safe. There are good procedures in place to ensure that all necessary checks

are carried out before staff begin work at the school.

You are very alert to the safeguarding implications when pupils do not attend the school site. Effective systems are in place to check that pupils are safe regardless of where they are. Staff go to great lengths to promote improved attendance for pupils who find it hard to attend school, including through phone calls and visits to their homes.

Leaders regularly attend multi-agency briefings where current local risk factors are shared. To help pupils keep themselves safe, the curriculum covers the specific areas that staff have identified as relevant to pupils. Topics include alcohol and drugs awareness, sexual health, sexual exploitation and British values.

Staff complete behaviour logs following any significant incident. These are completed in line with local authority requirements.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we explored whether the curriculum meets pupils' needs. We gathered evidence about how well the management committee supports leaders to ensure that teaching is of good quality. We also looked at how well behavioural incidents are managed.
- Both pupils and staff told me how the range of subjects has improved over the last year. There is now a good range of courses that pupils can study which lead to formal qualifications. These include GCSEs and functional skills qualifications in a number of academic subjects, as well as BTECs in sport, hair and beauty, catering, and travel and tourism. Several pupils left school last year having obtained GCSE and functional skills qualifications. Work in pupils' books shows that they put a good level of care and attention into their studies.
- Pupils who find coming into school too difficult are provided with alternative ways of learning, such as joining virtual classrooms on the internet, or attending sessions run by alternative providers. However, leaders have not ensured that the education provided in these ways is always well matched to pupils' needs.
- Recent developments in the personal, social, health and economic curriculum are helping it to become a strength of the school. The content of this curriculum is responsive to the current needs of pupils. Topics are taught during tutor time at the start of each day, or as part of whole days set aside for this purpose. Pupils value the opportunity to learn about things that both interest and concern them.
- Staff record pupils' learning needs in individual 'my plan' documents. These help teachers know what difficulties each pupil may experience in their learning, and what approach to use to address these. Targets are set within these plans, identifying the expected small steps of progress. This approach is not yet established across the school or with alternative providers.
- The management committee acknowledges that it has relied on external professionals to provide its members with information about the quality of teaching. Committee members are beginning to work more closely with leaders to gain their own perspective on this aspect of the school's work. Although they are

provided with regular information from the newly established academic assessments, this information is based on individual teacher's judgements, and is not validated in any other way. Therefore, it is not reliable. Standardised reading tests have recently been introduced to help leaders measure progress.

- A positive reward system, introduced earlier this year, is helping to motivate pupils to do well. Teachers and teaching assistants are confident in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils feel that behavioural incidents are well managed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- when pupils are educated by external organisations, learning is carefully matched to their needs and abilities, and helps them to make good progress
- teachers' assessment judgements are supported by using examples of pupils' work
- teachers make consistent use of information about pupils' prior attainment to inform lesson planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Andy Lole
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We held meetings with you and your senior leadership team to discuss the school's current self-evaluation and what work you had carried out to improve the school. We met with other school leaders to discuss the curriculum, behaviour, progress and attendance. We looked at examples of pupils' work, and at school records. You and several members of staff were involved in discussing safeguarding arrangements. Together, we looked at various documents, including the single central record and your new system for recording safeguarding concerns. Inspectors examined a variety of documents, including school policies, your raising attainment plan and self-evaluation form. We visited lessons, breakfast club and breaktime, where we carried out observations and talked to pupils. We visited two alternative providers. A meeting was held with three members of the management committee. Another meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.

There were no results from the pupil survey and insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to make an evaluation. Inspectors spoke to

parents before and during the inspection. There were 17 responses to the staff survey.