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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 November 2017

Mr Tim Self
Brighton and Hove Pupil Referral Unit
Lynchet Close
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 7FP

Dear Mr Self

Short inspection of Brighton and Hove Pupil Referral Unit

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2017 with Catherine Davies, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your total commitment to provide the best possible education for pupils at your school is shared by staff and the management committee. You demonstrate strong moral purpose and compassionate leadership. Pupils, staff, parents and the local authority all speak positively about how well your school re-engages pupils. Pupils have high regard for you and your staff. You have provided a happy and highly focused learning environment. Staff identify pupils' behavioural needs well and provide them with excellent support. Pupils respond positively and make good progress. One pupil said, 'we are like a family' and another said, 'I love it here.'

Since your appointment as acting headteacher in September 2017, you have provided an ongoing stability in leadership. Together with the skilled management committee you have implemented useful procedures to identify the effectiveness of the school. These have led to accurate self-evaluation and a comprehensive school improvement plan. There is much capacity to improve the school further.

Pupils' progress in basic skills was an area of improvement in the last inspection and you have tackled this well. You have worked hard with other school leaders and staff to raise outcomes and improve teaching and learning in English and mathematics. Teachers identify precisely the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding on joining the school. Effective teaching enables pupils to make up

for previously lost ground. Their progress is typically rapid in their first months at the school. Over time, pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills improve steadily. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils, including those that are most able, to write in full sentences and paragraphs in subjects other than English.

Your staff prepare pupils well in order for them to return to mainstream schooling, or to move on to post-16 education or training. You have developed positive relationships with the local authority and local schools so that pupils are supported well during transition in and out of the school.

In the last inspection you were also asked to improve attendance, especially for the small group of pupils who are persistently absent. You and your staff have implemented many effective strategies to remove barriers to good attendance. Case studies of individual pupils' attendance show notable improvements. Overall, there are still too many pupils who are persistently absent because of the challenges that these pupils face. You rightly consider that strong focus on levels of attendance is an ongoing key priority for the school.

You were also asked to ensure that teachers consistently apply behaviour management strategies. Your staff have developed a consistent approach to rewarding pupils' positive behaviour. Staff provide pupils with very clear guidelines about acceptable behaviour. Adults make sure that respectful, working relationships are developed between pupils. Similarly, there is a high degree of respect between pupils and staff. Pupils' attitudes to learning, and their behaviour, are good.

Members of the management committee are well qualified and experienced. You provide the management committee with detailed reports, helpfully summarising the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. In particular, you focus on the progress of the high proportion of pupils that are disadvantaged. Management committee members make regular visits to the school so they can see the quality of provision for themselves. They provide appropriate support and challenge to you and other leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The culture of safeguarding is strong in the school. All staff are trained regularly on how to keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.

Staff know pupils exceptionally well. Pupils know who to talk to if they have any concerns. One pupil said, 'We can talk to anyone about anything.' Pupils feel that adults will listen to them.

Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that adults deal with bullying cases well, should they occur.

Leaders communicate well with parents, carers and other agencies should there be

concerns about a pupil. Although record-keeping describes any concerns and proposed actions, details of results of actions taken are not recorded consistently well.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including pupils' progress in basic skills, attendance, behaviour, and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.
- Teaching of reading in the primary phase harnesses pupils' interest successfully. Pupils read daily. Pupils make good gains in their reading skills over time. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils to read.
- Teachers are developing pupils' writing skills well across all year groups. Pupils' work in English shows good progress in spelling and grammatical techniques. Teachers display pupils' extended writing prominently on classroom walls. Pupils are proud of their work. At key stages 3 and 4, pupils are working well to practise skills needed for English examinations or assessments. Pupils engage well in discussion and debate, showing empathy and consideration of others' points of view. Pupils have opportunities to write at length for a variety of purposes in their English sessions. However, teaching does not consistently provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their extended writing skills across the curriculum.
- In mathematics, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 apply their knowledge and skills to solving real-life problems. Teaching encourages discussion about the steps taken to solve problems. While the development of knowledge and skills is sound at primary phase, problem-solving is developed less well. Leaders have plans to introduce more problem-solving and discussion in mathematics lessons in the primary phase. Pupils of all ages make steady progress in mathematics.
- Teaching does not always pose challenging questions that extend learning and develop deeper understanding. Most-able pupils are not consistently challenged. Leaders have recognised that some most-able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have successfully improved pupils' behaviour. Staff manage any occasional bouts of unsettled behaviour well. Typically, the school is a calm, positive learning environment. Pupils, when they join the school, quickly adopt a positive attitude to learning. Pupils are usually polite and well behaved.
- Leaders are relentless in their search for effective ways to improve attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent. They track pupils' attendance closely and liaise with external professionals so that pupils are supported to attend school regularly. Leaders have high expectations regarding levels of attendance that they communicate well to pupils and parents. Nevertheless, there are still too many pupils who do not attend regularly enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers develop questioning to deepen pupils' understanding, especially for the most able
- pupils are given more opportunities to practise extended writing at greater depth
- they strengthen recording systems regarding concerns about pupils so that written records consistently reflect the outcomes of their actions
- they continue to focus on improving the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Child
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your senior leaders, and considered 16 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors spoke with the chair and one other member of the management committee. A meeting was held with the deputy designated safeguarding lead and the school business manager.

We considered 12 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with two parents. A phone call was made to a local authority representative.

We observed teaching and learning in lessons and attended an assembly. Inspectors spoke with a number of pupils during the inspection.

We examined a number of documents, including: the self-evaluation and the school improvement plan; analysis of the school's performance information; the school's own staff, parent and pupil surveys; case histories of pupils; information relating to the behaviour and attendance of pupils; safeguarding and child protection records; and minutes from management committee meetings.