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17 October 2013

Stuart Bailey  
Headteacher  
Parkside Pupil Referral Unit  
291 Spring Road  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP4 5ND

Dear Mr Bailey

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Parkside Pupil Referral Unit**

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons, additional inspector, to your pupil referral unit on 15 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

This inspection was prompted, not by any concerns about the unit, but to check on the safety and well-being of new students who had previously attended unregistered provision at Kesgrave Medical Group. The unit was given no notice of the inspection.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding students and child protection arrangements. We met with you, the two deputy headteachers, some of the staff and students who were previously at Kesgrave Medical Group, a parent and a support worker from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Telephone discussions took place with two parents, the Vice-Chair of the Management Committee and a local authority adviser. We toured the accommodation and visited classrooms briefly.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The unit's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

## **Context**

There are 52 students on roll and all have medical needs that relate to their emotional well-being. Twenty-two students have a statement of special educational needs. Most students have White British Heritage. Over half of the students are known to be entitled to support through pupil premium funding.

All of the 17 students who previously attended Kesgrave Medical Group are now on the roll of the unit. This happened at the start of September and students initially remained at the previous site. Two weeks ago, all students transferred to the unit's site. Six members of staff transferred with the students. The medical needs of the new students are similar to those already at the unit. Students are in Years 8 to 11.

To accommodate more students and the wider age range, the unit is now registered to admit 50 students between the ages of 11 and 16 years. Previously, the unit was solely for Key Stage 4 students.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Although they have been at the unit for less than two weeks, new students have settled very well. Those we talked to say that they like being at the unit because it is more like a school than Kesgrave Medical Group and there are more facilities. They say that the transition is going well because they have come with staff that they know, the building is not too big and other staff are getting to know them. This is also the view of the parents we spoke to. Students are happy to wear the unit's uniform; they arrive promptly and are keen to get on with lessons. Some have already asked that their timetable is extended so that they can attend for more time. Those in Year 11 work appropriately as a separate group to continue the courses already started at Kesgrave Medical Group but Year 10 students are working confidently alongside your other students. In the long term, you expect that all students will work in the appropriate age groups and take full advantage of working with teachers for different subjects. Currently, new students have part-time programmes, and most attend all of the sessions available to them.

New students and staff benefit from the calm, professional and caring approach of the unit. Existing and new staff are highly experienced in working with students with complex emotional needs, particularly in reducing their anxieties. The way that you set up the induction for new students and their parents not only gave confidence and helped students settle quickly, but also made sure that existing students remain settled and focused on their studies.

Staff that transferred to the unit feel welcome and well prepared for the change. They already feel part of the staff team and say that having you or a deputy at the previous site on an interim arrangement worked well. They know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about students and you have made sure that they have

the additional training that other staff have for child protection. Appropriate checks were made to ensure staff's suitability for working at the unit and there is a suitable single central record of the checks.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

Together with the management committee, you were quick to respond to the local authority's need to provide appropriate educational provision for the students at Kesgrave Medical Group. In fact, you embraced the idea because you are ambitious for the unit to offer more and know that in the past you have not had sufficient places to admit all of those referred to you. You have already consulted with the Department for Education, and with staff and parents, about the possibility of becoming a multi-academy trust. You have decided to put conversion to an academy on hold until the new arrangements are well-established and future plans debated fully.

Your actions, together with those of your staff, mean that transition to the unit happened quickly and has gone smoothly for new parents, staff and students, as well as for existing staff and students. You are mindful that this is a transition phase and that there is more to do before all students are working within the unit in the way that you want. I agree with you that the additional students, the nature of their previous provision and extending the provision to cater for Key Stage 3 students, pose significant challenges for the long-term development of the unit. Although getting things started quickly was the right priority for students' safety and well-being, there is some catching up to do to make sure that provision for their academic achievements and future prospects is as good as it can be. This relates specifically to the curriculum for Key Stage 3 students, the availability of full-time education for all students and sufficient accommodation.

The new students attend part time, as they did at Kesgrave Medical Unit, for mornings or afternoons only. Keeping the arrangements the same has helped students to transfer to the unit successfully but this is not appropriate in the long term because it does not offer the education that they are entitled to. All students must have access to a full-time programme over 10 sessions each week so that they can attend all day and every day whenever they are well enough to do so.

The curriculum for new students is too narrow, partly because the necessary changes have happened quickly but also because attending part time means that they do not attend for long enough to have a broad curriculum. The curriculum for Key Stage 3 students has not yet been thought through thoroughly enough. This is partly because the reasons for students attending the unit in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not yet clear. For example, it would not normally be appropriate for new students to come in during Key Stage 3 and stay on into Key Stage 4 because this is not the purpose of pupil referral units. Making use of all existing accommodation is underway and, when complete, increases opportunities for Key Stage 3 students.

The management committee has its eye firmly fixed on making sure that the recent changes do not compromise the quality of the unit's work. They know the issues that have emerged as a result of the new arrangements and have members on the committee who can challenge the unit's plans and actions for further improvements. Information available to parents and others does not yet reflect the recent changes, such as policies and the website.

### **External support**

Weaknesses in the local authority's arrangements for students at Kesgrave Medical Group promoted unreasonably low aspirations amongst students and their families for the availability of good quality, full-time education and a broad curriculum. This means that the unit has big job to do in raising expectations for students to attend for as much of the week as their medical needs permit at any given time.

Local authority advisers are confident in the expertise of you and your staff, and see the new arrangement as a good solution to the problems surrounding the previous provision. You welcome partnership with the local authority. It is early days to assess the quality of the local authority's current support. It has been helpful in solving some of your accommodation issues. There are still some financial implications to sort out, linked to the speed that the new arrangements moved forward.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Make sure that all students have access to a full-time programme.
- Develop a rich curriculum for each key stage.
- Set out clear strategic plans with an agreed rationale for future admissions, particularly to Key Stage 3.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Management Committee. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**