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Ms Clare Barden

Restormel Alternative Provision Academy
The Sidings
Brunel Business Park
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Dear Ms Barden

Short inspection of Restormel Alternative Provision Academy

Following my visit to the school on 4 May 2016 with Paul Winterton, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since taking up your appointment in February 2015, you have driven improvement at a fast pace. With the support of the vice-principal, you have successfully tackled the areas for improvement set out at the previous inspection. Your work is underpinned by a determination and absolute belief that every pupil deserves a high-quality education. As a result, pupils' outcomes have improved, together with their attendance. This is because they feel valued, cared for and very well supported to behave well and learn effectively.

You and your leaders have an in-depth and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. On taking up your post, you immediately tackled the weaknesses in the teaching of English. As a result of the relentless focus to improve standards in this subject, pupils read every day with increasing fluency and comprehension. You have raised teachers' expectations of what each pupil can achieve. They now plan opportunities for pupils to write in subjects across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils are being well prepared to gain access to GCSE qualifications and to transfer to college, apprenticeships or return to mainstream education.

Together with your staff team, you have created a safe, welcoming and vibrant learning environment which pupils appreciate and respond positively to. Pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and self-esteem markedly improve during their time at Restormel. In addition, you hold staff fully to account for the quality of their teaching. This ensures that

pupils achieve well and make good progress from often very low starting points. This represents a transformation in culture, resulting in pupils who become increasingly resilient and able to learn and achieve effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You, your staff and governors place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and secure. A strong culture of safeguarding is evident. Staff told inspectors, 'All concerns are followed up immediately. Leaders are tenacious in their approach to safeguarding.' School leaders have a deep understanding of the needs of and potential risks for their vulnerable pupils. As a result of frequent and high-quality training, all staff recognise and immediately act on signs of harm or risk when they occur. For example, you have ensured that all staff have been trained on aspects of safeguarding such as child sexual exploitation and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. In addition, leaders ensure that all staff are recruited safely. They have received appropriate training to be able to check the suitability of staff who work in school.

You work closely with health and social care agencies, meeting together to plan and implement the support pupils need. You rigorously follow up attendance issues with the education welfare officer to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Highly personalised support is immediately put into place where concerns arise. Parents recognise that you and your staff 'go above and beyond' to provide support for their children and also for themselves and their families. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. One parent summarised the views of others, as follows: 'My child loves this school; it has made a real difference. It is the best school ever.' This is having a very positive impact in reducing the risks they face and in keeping them safe.

The school teaches pupils how to stay safe in a range of circumstances through your planned personal, social and health education programme. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe online and feel able to speak to their teachers if they have concerns. They learn to manage their feelings of anger and frustration effectively and to trust the adults who work with them. As a result, the school is a well-ordered and happy learning community. The school's records confirm that the number of exclusions have sharply declined since the beginning of this year.

Inspection findings

- Since taking up your appointment in February 2015, you have led improvements at a fast but appropriate pace. You, and your vice-principal, with strong support from the management committee and the Acorn academy board, have tackled weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment with determination and rigour. There is no complacency in this school. All leaders and staff are ambitious for their pupils and for the school to provide an outstanding education.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Records of frequent monitoring confirm a relentless focus on ensuring that improvements in teaching impact well on pupils' learning and achievement. However, leaders have identified the need to provide opportunities for teachers to observe each other and to share the

good practice already established. In addition, they are planning visits to lessons in local mainstream schools to develop and improve their practice even further.

- On their appointment, leaders quickly identified the urgent need to improve standards in English. As a result of intensive staff training and the wealth of new resources, most pupils make at least expected progress in this subject. A good proportion make better than expected progress from their starting points. In particular, leaders have strengthened the focus given to the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) and reading. The school's improved assessment systems enable teachers to precisely identify gaps in pupils' learning, particularly in their knowledge of phonics. This work begins in key stage 1 which helps pupils build early reading skills quickly. Pupils in the primary years read with confidence and enjoyment. This is having a very positive impact on developing their fragile self-esteem and building personal resilience.
- Teaching assistants contribute effectively to the progress pupils make in their personal development. For example, they build strong relationships with the pupils they work with. However, the school's approach to how teaching assistants support pupils' academic development is not always consistently implemented. Consequently, some pupils do not receive the highly personalised support they need to help them make the best possible progress. The school has adopted an 'extended questioning' approach to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the concepts taught. This ensures that teachers always look to challenge pupils further and extend their learning. However, this approach is not yet implemented consistently.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken great care to develop an appropriate and relevant curriculum for their pupils. Nearly all pupils are expected to achieve a GCSE in English and mathematics this year. However, the school also offers opportunities to achieve accreditation in other subjects such as science, art and personal education. A 'no excuses' and 'high expectations' culture is maintained across the curriculum. Those pupils who find learning difficult are very well supported and other pupils experience success following periods of missed or disrupted schooling. The focus on making teaching and learning interesting and inspiring supports pupils to achieve well in their personal and academic development. Records confirm that this approach is working well and pupils are gaining more accreditation, particularly in English and mathematics, than in previous years. High-quality careers advice supports pupils, with the involvement of their families to plan and achieve appropriate destinations. As a result, nearly all pupils go on to education, training or employment and are well supported by the school until settled into this new environment.
- The school makes highly effective use of off-site provision. Pupils attend a local farm, learning to care for animals, grow plants and learn skills in vocational trades such as construction. In addition, they develop skills in business and enterprise through their work with the local farmer's market. Profit is currently being used to restore a quad bike at the farm. Pupils learn to cooperate and build good relationships with their peers and adults in the local community. Their self-esteem and confidence have greatly improved as a result of this work.
- Governance is strong and is having a positive impact on the school's improvement. Members of the management committee and the Acorn academy board know the school well. They rigorously analyse the school's information and challenge leaders to secure further improvement, holding them to account for

the performance of the pupils and the school. Governors have supported leaders effectively, particularly when they have needed to take difficult decisions in order to improve achievement swiftly. As a result, staffing is stable and pupils' outcomes continue to rise as teaching, learning and assessment improve.

- The school's agreed approach to providing feedback to pupils is now being consistently implemented. Pupils use the verbal and written comments to help them understand how to improve their work. Effective feedback is helping pupils make good progress from typically low starting points, particularly in mathematics. The school's information about pupils currently at the school confirm that a higher proportion are making at least expected progress when compared with the previous years, as a result of the improving quality of teaching. However, inspection activities and the discussions held with leaders confirm that, on occasion, teaching lacks the challenge to ensure that pupils' achieve as well as they can.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently question pupils in lessons to extend their thinking and learning
- lessons are appropriately challenging to ensure that all pupils make good progress
- teaching assistants consistently use the school's agreed strategies to support pupils effectively
- teachers are given opportunities to observe each other in the school and in local schools to learn from the good practice already established to further develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Leahy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the vice-principal, the chair of the management committee and the chief executive of the Acorn Academy Trust. The team inspector met with you and the school's improvement adviser. In addition, I spoke with parents and scrutinised parents and staff's responses from surveys carried out by the school. Both inspectors spoke with staff and pupils throughout the day, including in lessons and at lunchtime. Both inspectors scrutinised a wide range of evidence relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching records, teachers' planning and assessment information. I also scrutinised the school's analysis of attendance, exclusions and behaviour records.