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Mr M Ball  
Chaselea PRU  
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Dear Mr Ball

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Chaselea PRU**

Following my visit to your school on 22 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in June 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the business manager and the chair and a member of the management committee. I spoke by telephone to representatives of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

The PRU currently has 37 pupils on roll from Years 7 to 11, out of a possible 44 places. Almost all these pupils have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. The majority are in Years 9 to 11. All pupils are now educated on site for the vast majority of the time, a change from the inspection in June. A special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) joined the school in September.

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

Immediately following the inspection in June, you set a clear and ambitious direction for the PRU's improvement. Rightly, you took swift and well-focused action

to make sure that all pupils received a suitable full-time education. Pupils who had previously been educated off-site or had received little education were brought back into the centre to be properly taught and safeguarded. You stopped using alternative provision that you did not think was suitable and ceased tuition for pupils at home. Throughout, you have been well supported by senior leaders and staff, who understand and support the changes that have been made.

The significant changes that were made in the second half of the summer term inevitably led to some unsettled behaviour at first, as new expectations were established for those pupils who had previously spent little time on site. The use of fixed-term exclusions rose sharply, but has now fallen. Leaders and the management committee know that the use of fixed-term exclusion as a tool to manage behaviour now needs to be minimised.

During the monitoring inspection, the PRU was calm. Pupils were in lessons and were largely focused on their work. Good relationships between staff and pupils were evident both in lessons and at informal times. Staff know all the pupils well and engage them pleasantly in social conversation, while being vigilant about their welfare. The building is well maintained, with bright, pertinent displays. Pupils respect the environment. In lessons, pupils were generally well focused on their work, particularly when staff's expectations were suitably high.

Attendance, although still low, has risen considerably from a very low baseline. At the time of the last inspection, a number of pupils were on part-time timetables. Almost all pupils now attend full time. Around a quarter of the pupils attend for over 90% of the time, and almost two thirds for over 80%, indicating some increasingly positive attitudes to school which can be built upon. Leaders have identified the need to analyse in more detail the reasons for absence, including for those pupils who attend comparatively well, in order to make their responses to non-attendance more refined and tailored to the needs of individuals.

Safeguarding processes are effective. A safeguarding audit commissioned by the local authority provided leaders with some useful guidance. Suitable training for leaders has taken place. Recruitment processes follow guidance and are well documented. Checks on temporary and supply staff are suitable. Good attention is paid to safeguarding and health and safety for the small numbers of pupils who attend alternative provision part time, or off-site enrichment.

The deputy headteacher has developed a comprehensive process for establishing a clear baseline for pupils' attainment on entry. The range of assessments now used allows the school to be analytical about pupils' skills, such as their ability to reason, their reading and their vocabulary. This information is being used well to help teachers to plan suitable work and to put in place any interventions that are needed. The deputy headteacher is setting suitably challenging targets for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics, paying appropriate attention to key stage 2 test outcomes as well as current attainment. The new SENCo has

had a positive impact on ensuring that pupils' learning needs are met. Importantly, the PRU has just begun work on a reading intervention programme for pupils who need it. For some of the pupils on roll, this is crucial in order to enable them to access the curriculum properly.

In 2017, Year 11 pupils attained considerably better GCSE results in English than they did in mathematics. You, together with other leaders, have identified that there were deficiencies in the examination access arrangements made for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Access arrangements have been put in place for those who need them this year. Teachers are giving pupils some suitable tips and hints about how to approach examination questions. A good example of this was observed in an English lesson. However, little attention has been paid yet to other aspects of successful examination preparation, such as developing pupils' resilience and their ability to manage anxiety.

The PRU's assessment information indicated that around two thirds of the pupils are now making the progress the PRU expects of them in order to meet their targets in English and mathematics. Leaders are not satisfied with this and are looking closely at reasons for underachievement, which include poor attendance and gaps in prior learning, in order to improve progress.

On Fridays, pupils currently come to school only in the morning, leaving before lunchtime. There is no good reason for this arrangement and it contravenes government guidance on school attendance. Moreover, pupils who receive free school meals do not receive their entitlement on Fridays. Leaders and management committee members know that this must change as a matter of urgency.

A review of governance was commissioned by the PRU following the inspection but has not yet taken place. The management committee has expanded, bringing some new members with useful and relevant skills. The chair and members have become more knowledgeable about PRUs and parameters within which PRUs work. The management committee is receiving better and timelier information from leaders, which in turn enables them to challenge more effectively than they have done in the past. They are ambitious for the PRU's next stage of improvement and realistic about the work that is still to be done.

Following the last inspection, the local authority commissioned a review of safeguarding, which was useful to the PRU. The commissioning lead has regular contact with you. Other support and challenge have been slow to come. A monitoring visit commissioned by the local authority to look at improvement since the inspection did not take place until early March. Support that has been commissioned to improve aspects of behaviour and well-being has not yet taken place.

Some tensions exist in the relationship between the PRU and the local authority, particularly around where the PRU fits in to meeting the demands that exist from

the high levels of permanent exclusion in the local area. The PRU currently has little capacity to provide short-term placements or to support mainstream schools. This is because there are so many permanently excluded pupils on roll, many of whom are not able to secure a place in a new school. Clarity and agreement are needed about the PRU's role and what it can reasonably achieve without diluting the quality of the education that is offered to its current pupils.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**