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12 June 2018  
Mrs Nicola Anderson  
Headteacher  
Leicester City Primary PRU  
Gervas Road  
Leicester  
Leicestershire  
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Dear Mrs Anderson

### **Short inspection of Leicester City Primary PRU**

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 2018 with Heather Hawkes, 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 April 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.**

Management committee members and the local authority acknowledge that there was a decline in standards across the pupil referral unit after the last inspection. At that time, pupils were based at two sites, known as the Arc and Phoenix. To drive improvements, members worked with the local authority on a joint plan. They appointed a permanent headteacher and worked towards bringing staff and pupils together, by merging the two units onto one site. It was agreed that as part of this process, the local authority would begin to allow the pupil referral unit to manage its own finances and develop its own systems to operate independently of the local authority, while still working in close partnership. The need to find a new site was also agreed.

Since your appointment in 2016, you have provided strong leadership and created a very positive culture throughout the school. As a result, most pupils have a positive attitude. They are generally happy, attend regularly and are well settled. Together with your leaders and management committee, you have purposefully worked to 'rebrand' the pupil referral unit and have been determined in your efforts to raise aspirations. As a result, there is now a stronger focus on teaching and learning, staff have higher expectations for their pupils and describe the learning environment now as being a 'school'.

In December 2016, the decision was taken to move pupils and staff from the Arc to the Phoenix site where you are now based. Together with the local authority and your management committee, you agreed that this interim step would be in the best interests of the pupils until a more permanent site could be found. Staff are very supportive of the decision and positive about the impact of your leadership. Now that a new site has been found, you are preparing for an anticipated move in September 2019. In the meantime, you are maintaining a key focus on current educational priorities for improvement.

You have faced a number of challenges, especially around staffing, but have nevertheless quietly and calmly dealt with these by taking on board good practice used elsewhere and by being outward-facing and reflective.

Together with leaders, you accurately identify the priorities and next steps for the school and your development plan reflects the 'journey' for the school and the timescales you have allocated to reach your goals.

Leaders have tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and the more recent priorities you have identified, to improve teaching and learning, behaviour, curriculum and assessment and to develop subject leadership. A great deal of work has gone into these areas but much of it is still at the early stages of development. You recognise that there is still a significant amount to be done to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

During the inspection, there was a lack of clarity over systems relating to the management of your record of pre-employment checks. This is because the pupil referral unit is still linked into the local authority's systems. This has caused leaders and members some frustrations.

The leadership team and management committee have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All necessary checks are made when appointing new staff. Pupils are encouraged to take part in a range of outdoor activities and risk assessments are carefully considered to support their safety and well-being.

Child protection records are well maintained. All staff receive regular training and updates relating to safeguarding matters. They are aware of how to make referrals using the school's system.

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection team followed a number of lines of enquiry to check the quality of education provided by the unit. Our first line of enquiry was to review how well pupil groups and lessons are organised to maximise learning and ensure that pupils are fully engaged in learning. This was because many of the pupils who are referred to you have previously had a negative, and often unsuccessful,

experience in a previous school.

- We observed jointly with school leaders. In the best lessons, pupils fully engaged in their learning. Teachers provided carefully thought-out tasks which were matched to each pupil's level of understanding and based on previous learning and knowledge. Teaching assistants provided good support and staff knew when to challenge pupils and when to provide further support. Pupils' books evidenced good progress over time from their starting points and pupils mostly took good care to do their best.
- There was, however, an inconsistency in teaching and learning and we did not observe this in all lessons and groups. In some cases, pupils' work in their books did not show evidence of knowledge and skills being built upon over time, feedback and marking did not adhere to the school's own agreed policy and work was not matched accurately enough to each pupil's needs and understanding.
- You have identified the need to drive improvement in teaching and have put in place a number of strategies to improve staff skills. These include individual action plans for all teachers linked to a coaching programme supported by senior leaders, peer-to-peer mentoring and support from an external consultant. You and your leaders have already evidenced improvements but accept that there is still some way to go in order to achieve consistency across the school.
- You have identified subject leaders and put training and development in place to support them in their roles. This was an area for improvement from the last inspection. You quite rightly, however, identified the need to 'go back to basics' in developing teachers' understanding of effective planning before delegating this responsibility. Subject leadership is therefore still at the early stages of development.
- Another key line of enquiry was to explore the effectiveness of your partnership work with professionals and families to support pupils' progress and their next steps in education. This is because the pupil referral unit is not intended to be the pupils' permanent learning environment and everyone is expected to move on to another school.
- You and your leaders work very closely with parents, carers and all appropriate agencies to support pupils in taking these steps. The appointment of a transition lead teacher has proved to be very effective. Staff work closely with local mainstream and special schools and go 'the extra mile' to ensure that pupils are able to make a smooth transition when the time comes. Parents and representatives from partner schools spoken to by inspectors were very positive and said that this was a strength of the school.
- We also explored the effectiveness of the school curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils and support them to achieve good learning outcomes. Leaders have taken time to consider the pupils' needs and how to engage them actively in the curriculum. They have reflected upon best practice offered by schools they have visited. The need to redevelop the curriculum and assessment process has been recognised and leaders have undertaken this piece of work with determination.
- You have recognised the great benefits of outdoor experiences and visits for your pupils and built these systematically into the curriculum. With leaders, you have

examined and worked through different assessment processes until you have become confident that the one you have developed links with the curriculum you have designed. It is also rigorous and robust in supporting your tracking and evaluation of progress. While the curriculum and a system for assessment have been developed, both of these are at the early stages of implementation.

- Inspectors found pupils' behaviour overall to be good, both in lessons and at breaktimes. When pupils did have incidents of inappropriate behaviour and needed to leave an activity, staff were quick to intervene and pupils were able to return. You recognise the importance of tracking attendance to reduce absence and the strategies leaders have in place are supporting improvement in overall attendance and for individual pupils. Attendance is good.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- support teachers to plan learning to ensure that work is matched to pupils' needs and enables them to make good progress over time
- continue to evolve and implement the new curriculum so that pupils gain broader access to activities they see as fun and challenging, that engage their attention and further develop their interest
- embed the new assessment system alongside the newly developed curriculum to accurately track, monitor and evaluate pupils' progress
- clarify subject leader roles, responsibilities and accountability in English, mathematics, science and personal and social education and ensure that leaders are given the necessary professional development to fulfil these roles effectively
- work with the local authority to finalise the agreed separation of systems to enable the pupil referral unit to independently manage its own resources.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynda Morgan  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors held meetings with you, other leaders, members of the management committee and staff. They also held telephone conversations with some parents and representatives of schools you work with. Inspectors visited classrooms with senior leaders and looked at pupils' work. They spoke with pupils in lessons and during

breaktimes. There were only two responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents; however, inspectors considered the evaluations from the school's own latest survey of parents. They also considered the responses to the staff survey.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding records, assessment information about pupils' progress, information about behaviour, attendance and safety, and the school's self-evaluation and development plan. Inspectors also looked at information published on the school's website.