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Mr Andrew Burton
Headteacher
Bridge Short Stay School
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Dear Mr Burton

Short inspection of Bridge Short Stay School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2018 with Andrea Quigley, 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 October 2013.

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.

The quality of education declined after the last inspection, but it is now improving. Since your appointment in January 2018, you have taken informed and decisive action to raise standards.

Members of the management committee have a wide range of appropriate skills and experience. They use this well to support and challenge leaders to improve the school. Although governance is now strong, the current management committee has only been in place for a relatively short period of time.

Senior leaders and members of the management committee have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they are using this detailed insight to transform provision. Leaders now collect a great deal of data about all aspects of the school's work. However, they do not always systematically analyse this information to provide a clear overview of the impact of their actions.

Members of the current leadership team have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. They have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and leaders have addressed the areas identified as needing improvement

at the time of the previous inspection. Most staff help pupils understand the purpose of their learning by indicating what new skills and knowledge they are teaching. Staff also provide appropriate written instructions which pupils can read. There is some very strong practice in the school, but the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. On occasions, learning time is lost as lessons do not start promptly and pupils are not fully engaged in purposeful activities. At times, pupils are not challenged to make good progress and a small number do little in lessons. Additionally, too many pupils are late to school in the morning.

Leaders have recently revised the curriculum. Key stage 4 pupils can access more GCSE subjects than in the past and there are further opportunities for all secondary-age pupils to learn through a wider range of alternative subjects. Pupils can now follow courses that cover first aid, sport and leisure, mixed martial arts, childcare and motor mechanics. Programmes of study have also been designed to help pupils improve their social skills and develop their ability to communicate well.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is improving. However, although attendance is much better than it was in the past, too many pupils do not attend school on a regular basis.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. This aspect of the school's work is well led and there is a strong culture for keeping children safe in the school.

Effective procedures are in place to follow up absence and check that pupils who are not in school are safe. On the first day of absence, staff make telephone calls to parents. If a pupil remains off school, staff continue to stay in contact and make home visits if required. Systems are also in place to ensure that the pupils who attend alternative provision stay safe.

All staff are well trained and kept up to date about safeguarding issues. Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities and they consciously consider pupils' welfare in all aspects of their work.

Processes for reporting issues are clear and known by staff. Referrals are timely, and appropriate action is taken if required. Staff work well with outside agencies and concerns are followed up thoroughly.

Pupils are taught about how to stay safe. They learn about personal safety, how to protect themselves from grooming and radicalisation, and how to remain safe when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- Teaching is improving. Staff care about the pupils and they are enthusiastic about promoting good learning. They have secure subject knowledge and staff use their positive relationships with the pupils to help pupils develop the characteristics of successful learners.
- There is some strong practice in the school. When teaching is most effective, for example in art and creative media, assessment information is used well to plan and reshape learning, resources enrich activities and staff use questions effectively to probe understanding. This helps the pupils make good progress. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remain. Learning time is not regularly used efficiently and some staff do not have high enough expectations of the pupils. Less effective teaching is characterised by a lack of challenge for pupils to produce their best work.
- Assessment practice is still developing, and teachers do not yet apply the school's new feedback policy consistently. Strategies to promote literacy and numeracy in a range of different subjects are not embedded and few pupils read for pleasure. Leaders have plans in place to further improve outcomes in English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, Year 11 pupils have left the school with a range of qualifications including GCSEs. Last year, most Year 11 pupils moved on to appropriate post-16 destinations and over a third of all pupils returned to mainstream education or moved into specialist provision.
- A new and more appropriate curriculum is now in place. It has been designed in consultation with leaders of neighbouring schools to support the needs of the pupils. Consequently, it contributes well to improvements in pupils' personal development, behaviour, well-being and progress. It also promotes effectively fundamental British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- The overarching aim of the curriculum is to help pupils return to mainstream education and to gain the experiences and qualifications that will allow pupils to sustain appropriate places in post-16 provision. It is already beginning to do this.
- Over time, pupils have not made strong progress in the school. However, as a result of stronger leadership, a better curriculum and improved teaching, current pupils are making improved progress.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. The three school rules of 'Ready, Respectful and Safe' are used consistently and pupils are becoming increasingly proud of their school. After expectations of behaviour rose earlier in the year, there was an increase in fixed-term exclusions. However, the instances of inappropriate behaviour are now declining.
- Most pupils have better attendance at the school than they had in their previous setting. However, some pupils do not attend regularly, and too many are late in the morning.
- Senior leaders, effectively supported by the management committee, are taking

effective action to improve the school. They collect a wide range of information but do not always systematically analyse this to provide a clear overview of the impact of their actions. This makes it more difficult to refine strategies to further develop the provision that they offer.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance and punctuality improve
- teaching is consistently good, and time is used well to improve learning
- the large amount of information that is collected by school leaders is systematically analysed to inform further improvements to the quality of the provision.

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

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other staff. The lead inspector spoke to four members of the management committee, including the chair, and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. The team inspector spoke to a leader from one of the alternative providers used by the school.

Short visits were made to every classroom with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally and behaviour was observed at the start and end of the day, in lessons and during social time.

There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for the results to be analysed. The lead inspector considered two free-text comments made by parents on Parent View.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and the lead inspector looked at published information on the school's website.