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Mr G Alcock
Headteacher
Hampden House PRU
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Dear Mr Alcock

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Hampden House PRU

Following my visit to your school on 19 March 2019, 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 October 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and other leaders to discuss actions taken since the previous inspection, focusing primarily on behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. I had a separate meeting with the management committee member responsible for safeguarding. I also met four members of the management committee (including the chair) and spoke to the standards and excellence officer from the local authority. Over lunch, I spoke with pupils to gain their views of the provision. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have not been any changes to the senior leadership team. One teacher has left the school and the post is being covered by a

long-term supply teacher. A new member joined the management committee in November 2018. The number of pupils on the school roll is 18. Seven pupils have left the school, with some now being educated in specialist long-term provision. In December 2018, leaders received an academy order from the Department for Education. They are currently working with the local authority to consider the school's future designation.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You have used the inspection as a 'lever for change' and made improvements across the piece, not simply focusing on the areas listed in the previous report. You have brought about significant improvement in pupils' behaviour and how well they attend the school. Leaders, your management committee and the local authority representatives work well together. They provide you with effective support and are fully supportive of your work to improve the school. Your improvement plan and the statement of action focus suitably on tackling the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.

Safeguarding processes were ineffective at the last inspection. Since then, you have tightened up your procedures for safeguarding pupils and have introduced additional checks to make sure these are maintained. Staff now display more 'safeguarding curiosity' and are more insistent on the checks they require from other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff clearly record any steps they take to show that suitable welfare checks are made on pupils who are persistently absent. All safeguarding files have been reviewed and processes are much tighter. Your weekly meeting with the designated safeguarding lead provides a further check that files are maintained well and all actions are completed. The management committee member responsible for safeguarding brings valuable experience to the role. He has a clear understanding of what is needed to improve and has brought in closer monitoring that ensures safeguarding processes are far more robust. The half-termly meetings with members of the management committee focused on safeguarding provide further useful checks and balances.

During the inspection, I sampled some pupils' case files of safeguarding incidents. The updated chronologies now match the contents in the files. Files contained information on the reasons for the concern, any actions taken, meetings attended, any other relevant risks, advice sought, and any wider agency involvement. Records showed that subsequent actions taken to safeguard pupils, such as requesting a social care welfare check, are done in a timely way. The processes for checking on the safety of pupils who are persistently absent are much sharper. Additionally, records show that staff are now working more closely with external agencies to secure additional services linked to pupils' mental health. Your updated concern form helps staff record necessary information more effectively and allows you to record follow-up actions more easily. However, it was noted that, in a few cases, staff referrals are still being completed on your old form.

To improve pupils' behaviour, you have clarified your expectations for how they should behave. Pupils' posters displayed around the school reinforce messages such as, 'We keep our hands and feet to ourselves to be kind.' You have focused more on rewarding positive behaviours, while highlighting to pupils how their actions will still have consequences. The internal exclusion unit provides an opportunity for pupils to reflect on how their behaviour affects others. Together with the 'time-out' room, this helps pupils to manage their own behaviour better. Consequently, you have seen a reduction in the number of serious behavioural incidents.

Staff have been trained so they can better manage some pupils' erratic behaviour more effectively. By looking closely at what works well, they can produce a behaviour, teaching and management plan for each pupil. Staff expectations are higher. They challenge the use of bad language and insist on common courtesies, such as not shouting out. Staff are now more proficient in spotting 'trigger points' and employ effective strategies to pre-empt more serious incidents from developing. For the most part, this helps pupils to overcome their difficult moments, stay focused and remain on task. In lessons, we saw pupils who are mainly working hard and responding to staff requests quickly. A few pupils, in less structured activities, still make the wrong choices.

Your behaviour records reflect the improvements we saw during learning walks. You knew you had to reduce the level of exclusions, despite some pupils' behaviour presenting significant challenges. Fixed-term exclusions spiked at the time of the previous inspection, probably linked to the inappropriateness of some pupils' placements. Since then, you have judiciously made sure that you only admit pupils who are likely to benefit from what the school can offer. Pupils requiring long-term specialist provision are guided elsewhere. This helps staff to meet pupils' needs more effectively, and fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly. For example, there have been fewer exclusions in the period from December to March than there were in October. Behavioural incidents and the use of restraint have also seen significant reductions. This ties in with pupils' perceptions; they say that lessons are calmer, pupils focus on their work better and there has been a clampdown on poor behaviour, including swearing.

Pupils attend better than they did at the time of the previous inspection. Your effective processes have resulted in an improvement of 12% in overall attendance since Christmas. Pupils attend more regularly and achieve more than they did at the time of the previous inspection. You have adapted your curriculum offer and introduced additional therapies to support pupils better. More spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities and extended vocational and creative activities help pupils to develop socially, emotionally and academically. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is one third of the figure seen in October. Most pupils now attend regularly, and a small number have never missed a day's schooling.

The management committee monitors the school's effectiveness more closely. The small team give their time freely. They visit regularly, conduct pupil perception

interviews and attend meetings to check on progress against targets in the action plan. This helps them to assess accurately the quality of the provision. The school has been well supported by the local authority. Frequent visits, additional support and clear guidance focusing on specific issues help leaders to resolve issues identified at the previous inspection. Leaders are rightly pleased with the positive start they have made but are conscious of the need to maintain the pace of improvements

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 Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Randall
Her Majesty's Inspector