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Mrs Elisa Entwistle  
Headteacher  
Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School  
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Gloucestershire  
GL4 0RQ

Dear Mrs Entwistle

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 October 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and the management committee are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen improvement planning to ensure greater clarity about how actions will improve pupils' achievements
- continue to build a curriculum that precisely meets the needs of the pupils and enables them to achieve well and catch up with their peers
- improve the quality of reading, especially phonics, by establishing a clear phonics

programme and ensuring that books are suitably matched to pupils' needs

- further improve the attendance of pupils

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and staff to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I talked to the chair of the management committee and three other committee members. Also, I met with the strategic lead from the local authority and held a phone call with the independent school improvement partner. I looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the school's evaluation of its performance, the school improvement plan, documents relating to governance and behaviour logs. I visited lessons jointly with three Year 11 pupils to observe pupils' learning and to talk to them about their experiences attending the provision.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, you have been appointed as the permanent headteacher. A significant staff restructure has taken place and ten new members of staff have been appointed. Pupils now attend the three sites across the provision according to age and key stage. Primary pupils attend the Joys Green Centre, key stage 3 pupils attend the Raikes Centre and key stage 4 attend Russet House. The management committee is now securely in place, with a new chair. Management committee members have the knowledge, skills and expertise to support and challenge leaders in accelerating the pace of improvement.

## **Main findings**

You provide strong leadership for the school. You have not been afraid to tackle underperformance of staff when they have not reached your high expectations. The appointment of qualified teachers with specialist subject expertise and the relocation of pupils ensures that pupils are receiving an improving quality of education. However, you, your senior leaders and management committee acknowledge that the pace of improvement needs to gather speed in order to become a securely good provider.

You and your fellow leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. However, work needs to be undertaken quickly to sharpen school improvement planning. While you have identified with accuracy the areas that require improvement to raise the quality of education, they are too sweeping. The plan does not have the precision or the clarity about the actions to be taken and the intended impact on raising pupils' achievement.

There is no doubt that you are raising the expectations of the quality of education pupils receive. Since September 2019, pupils are taught by qualified teachers who

have the relevant expertise in the subjects they teach, for example in science and mathematics. Early indications in pupils' work show these changes are having a more positive impact on their achievement.

Senior leaders have provided training for staff. For example, staff have made visits to mainstream schools to learn from good practice. Lesson visits and work scrutinies are more routinely undertaken by leaders to identify what is, or is not, working well. Staff receive careful guidance from leaders to improve their practice, which is raising the achievement of pupils. These improvements are reflected in the increase in the number of key stage 4 pupils achieving success in the most recent examinations.

Leaders clearly understand the importance of reading in supporting pupils' achievement. Daily reading sessions are raising the profile of reading across the provision. However, a synthetic phonics programme has yet to be introduced. Consequently, a lack of phonics knowledge is hindering pupils in developing their reading skills. Reading books are not always matched accurately to pupils' reading abilities. As a result, pupils are often reluctant readers, which hinders their progress across the subjects they study. This hindrance is particularly evident in their writing. While there are noticeable improvements to pupils' attitudes to their learning and they can explain with accuracy subject content, they do not have the vocabulary or spelling knowledge they need to become confident writers. This is a barrier to their achievement.

You acknowledge that careers guidance at the time of the previous inspection was weak. Since then, you have taken decisive action to ensure that pupils from Year 8 onwards receive timely and appropriate guidance on their career pathways. For example, Year 11 pupils who spoke with me welcome the support they receive in choosing the correct college or training programmes. Pupils explained how their work experience is planned around their interests and aspirations. As a result, pupils are better prepared for their futures.

Behaviour has improved since the last inspection, including the behaviour of older pupils. Leaders explained to me how the grouping of pupils into primary, key stage 3 and key stage 4 across the three sites has played a significant part in securing better behaviour. In addition, the use of a new system is enabling leaders to monitor behaviour more carefully. They use this information to track trends and spikes in behaviour. This tracking system enables leaders to be proactive rather than reactive when tackling pupils' challenging behaviour. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in the number of behavioural incidents across all three sites.

Pupils who spoke with me are very clear on the behaviours that are not tolerated by staff. They are aware of the behaviour policy and the consequences of poor behaviour. Pupils told me that the positive behaviour viewed on the day of the inspection was becoming more typical. They appreciate the guidance and support they receive by staff in finding strategies to regulate their behaviour. For example, pupils told me that the therapy sessions are really helping them to reduce their

anxiety and improve their behaviour. Furthermore, I was told how the provision was 'the best thing' and how staff 'really connect with you here'. Consequently, pupils are beginning to enjoy their education and have a belief that they can achieve in life.

The attendance of individual pupils is more carefully tracked and analysed by leaders. Systems are in place for when pupils do not attend, including home visits. As a result, attendance is increasing, but leaders accept that there is more work to do to ensure pupils attend every day.

### **External support**

You have received some effective support from officers from the local authority to tackle the key priorities from the previous section 5 inspection. Leaders, including the management committee, told me how these relationships continue to improve in the drive to provide the best for these vulnerable pupils. However, you do not hesitate to escalate any safeguarding concerns with the local authority if you do not feel you are getting an appropriate response.

You welcome the support you receive from the independent school improvement partner. This support, challenge and guidance are helping you in your determination to become a good school.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**