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15 September 2023

Chris Denley
Principal
Penwith Alternative Provision Academy
Penbrea Road
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Dear Mr Denley,

Special measures monitoring inspection of Penwith Alternative Provision Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 18 July 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in October 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the CEO of the multi-academy trust, other trust leaders, the school improvement partner and governor representatives the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also reviewed curriculum information, visited lessons and met with pupils and staff. I checked the procedures for keeping pupils safe and scrutinised documents, including the school's plans for improvement, external visit reports and minutes of meetings. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Penwith Alternative Provision Academy remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to leadership and staffing. The current principal took up his post in January 2023. He has quickly strengthened the school leadership team by appointing a vice principal, a primary leader and, more recently, a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). There will be a full complement of teaching staff from September 2023.

Leaders have begun to tackle the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, ably supported by staff from the multi-academy trust. Notably, the weaknesses in behaviour and in the relationships between pupils and staff have improved. Pupils are now very clear on the school's expectations for behaviour. They highly value the new reward system and strive to receive enough points to win a daily reward. Pupils are respectful towards staff and their peers, using appropriate and polite language. Staff note that this significant improvement has enhanced their well-being and has created positive classroom environments for pupils to learn in. Both staff and pupils feel that they are part of a valued and inclusive school community.

Leaders have a clear understanding of what makes an effective curriculum. They have taken significant steps to broaden the curriculum offer. For example, pupils now follow a physical education curriculum. Subject leaders have begun to identify ambitious knowledge and vocabulary in each subject. They are supported to organise this knowledge into a logical sequence and then break this down into smaller steps for pupils to learn. However, this work is in its infancy and has been hampered by staffing changes. Therefore, in some subjects, this work is not complete, particularly in the secondary phase. Leaders plan for the curriculum, in both primary and secondary, to be fully implemented from September 2023.

Leaders understand the importance of reading. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read follow a well-thought-out phonics curriculum. More recently, leaders have trialled a wider reading curriculum in the primary phase. They plan to fully adopt this across all year groups and are considering how this builds in difficulty towards the key stage 3 curriculum. However, this work is not yet complete.

Beyond the academic, leaders have secured wider opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. For example, some pupils choose to participate in surfing and paddleboard lessons, while others have been introduced to a local boxing club. Pupils are very positive about the extra-curricular visits the school offers.

Leaders recognise the importance of high-quality professional development for staff. For example, staff attend regular subject-specific events organised by the trust. This supports subject leaders to develop and improve their subject curriculums. However, teachers' knowledge and expertise to teach this newly designed curriculum are not yet secure. Leaders are working on this with urgency.

Leaders, as well as those responsible for governance, are tireless in their vision to improve the school. Governors have the necessary expertise to check the effectiveness of leaders' actions. For example, leaders' work to improve pupils' attendance remains a focus as currently low attendance for some pupils hinders their learning.

The newly appointed SENCo has prioritised the identification and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. While there is still much to do, leaders now have an accurate record of need and regularly review this to ensure that the right support for pupils is in place.

The designated safeguarding leader is new to the role. He, along with other leaders and staff, receive the training that they need to keep pupils safe. Staff report any concerns diligently, which the safeguarding team acts upon. Leaders are proactive in using external agencies to support pupils and their families. Leaders recognise that the robustness of record-keeping needs strengthening.

School and trust leaders have sought valuable external support. This is used well to regularly quality assure the impact of leaders' actions and to provide support, based on up-to-date educational research, to further enhance the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of the Wave multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Donna Briggs
His Majesty's Inspector