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Ms Helen Whitehead
Headteacher
Hambleton/Richmondshire Pupil Referral Service
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Dear Ms Whitehead

Short inspection of Hambleton/Richmondshire Pupil Referral Service

Following my visit to the pupil referral service on 24 January 2018 with Gina White HMI, 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 service was judged to be good in October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment as the headteacher in September 2017, you accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Your expert leadership and well-judged actions are building on existing strengths and bringing about improvements. Your strategic approach has begun to improve the ways you meet the different needs of pupils in the nine local secondary schools you serve. You are ambitious and well supported by the management committee. Staff value your clear direction. You have a good rapport with pupils.

Parents' written responses were highly positive about the quality of education and the progress made by their children. 'Every aspect is well planned and managed and the support is second to none.' 'S/he has come on in leaps and bounds.'

The school has 17 places. You currently have 13 pupils on roll who are permanently excluded from school, two of whom are at alternative placements. In addition, a few pupils attend the service who do not attend their school for medical reasons, for example due to anxiety or fatigue. A few other pupils with medical needs receive home tutoring. The service also makes part-time provision for a few secondary school pupils at risk of permanent exclusion, for example by providing level 1 courses in catering and construction.

Most of the permanently excluded pupils improve their attendance and make good progress both academically and personally. Some reintegrate successfully into a mainstream school. Others stay and then move on to a special school or college and

further training.

You have made a significant improvement in the provision for pupils with medical needs who suffer from anxiety and fatigue, by increasing the time they spend in school. Pupils are meeting this higher expectation and challenge, enjoying the wider range of subjects and developing their confidence through greater interaction with staff and pupils.

A parent said that their home-tutored pupil 'has thrived as a result of the efforts of the staff team whom I cannot praise highly enough'. Part-time secondary school pupils at risk of permanent exclusion benefit from the close support and tuition they receive while they successfully complete an accredited vocational course.

The previous inspection report asked leaders to improve the consistency of good teaching. When pupils arrive, teaching and support staff assess accurately pupils' subject knowledge and their social and emotional needs. As a result, they meet pupils' individual learning and development needs well. Staff skilfully engage and encourage pupils in their learning. Careful and respectful questioning draws out pupils' responses. On occasion, staff do not provide examples of what pupils should write and they accept brief answers instead of explanations in sentences. Some pupils lack skills in reading and do not receive regular extra support from an adult or peer to increase their enjoyment and understanding in reading.

The report also asked the school to develop the role of middle leaders. A leader for vocational work is developing actively a more structured approach to preparing pupils for work and the next steps in post-16 education or training. Subject leaders have taken responsibility for checking the accuracy of assessment, the progress of pupils and for making sure that the curriculum in English, mathematics and science is up to date with national changes. Staff consult other subject departments well and attend exam board training to ensure that they understand course requirements. Closer, more formal links with subject leaders in schools may strengthen middle leaders' management of the curriculum, teaching and assessment.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has maintained a strong culture of safeguarding and ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are very aware 'that it could happen here' and their high level of vigilance means that they are alert to the risks associated with vulnerable pupils. Staff take daily opportunities to raise specific concerns. Leaders call 'signs of safety' (SOS) meetings with other professionals and jointly consider actions to tackle emerging concerns. The chronological record of events shows that staff challenge other agencies promptly to make sure that pupils receive an appropriate and timely level of support.

Safeguarding training meets national requirements and addresses local issues. Staff know what to do in the event of a serious incident and leaders have reviewed their lock-down policies. Staff have had the recognised training to restrain pupils

physically and safely on the infrequent occasions when it is necessary to deal with highly challenging behaviour. Staff carry out risk assessments of, for example, online media and they liaise effectively with relevant agencies when there are significant concerns. Staff make thorough checks to keep pupils safe at alternative provision.

Pupils are safe and secure on the premises. They move safely around the school. Strong relationships with adults promote safety well. Parents are positive about the service and the care that their children receive. Leaders have established a good balance between encouraging pupils' independence and keeping them safe.

Inspection findings

- You have set clear standards for the behaviour that you and the school community expect. You have simplified the behaviour policy and the system of rewards. Staff and pupils welcome the greater clarity. There is a calm working atmosphere in lessons and around the school. Pupils generally display positive attitudes.
- The great majority of pupils arrive with a history of low attendance. They rapidly increase their attendance and attend for most of the time. A few continue to have low attendance. You are planning to introduce formal meetings, with school leaders and the local authority, for parents to discuss their child's persistent absence and the actions to overcome it.
- In 2017, all Year 11 pupils on roll gained a qualification in GCSE English, mathematics and science. A few gained a standard pass in mathematics but not in English. Staff had not prepared pupils well enough to meet the new examination requirements in English and predicted outcomes were not accurate. Pupils also gained other qualifications in computing, art, citizenship, design technology, construction and catering. Overall, the GCSE results showed that pupils made good progress from the time they joined the service. Your current assessments show that most pupils are making equally good progress from their starting points on entry. Poor attendance holds back the progress of a few pupils.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests with an appropriate range of academic and vocational subjects, including physical education and citizenship. The service teaches GCSE English Language and offers English Literature to those pupils who have studied it previously. Resources are appropriate for the practical work that takes place in science and vocational courses. Effective support from staff helps pupils to meet their targets for improving their social and emotional well-being and learning behaviour. Year 11 pupils spoke positively about the advice they received about their next steps and the opportunities for work experience. You use the pupil premium funding appropriately to provide extra activities for disadvantaged pupils. In response to the questionnaire, pupils were consistently positive about the service. However, few take part in sporting or cultural activities after school. Pupils said that they would like to do drama. You are rightly keen to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to enjoy learning and to take part in fun and challenging experiences. You are planning to introduce an accredited outdoor learning programme.

- Your accurate evaluation of teaching and learning highlights pupils' generally good engagement in learning. Teaching and support staff use their subject knowledge well to inform and guide pupils. You have identified that pupils occasionally receive too much help. For example, at times, teachers are too ready to provide pupils with the answers. You are planning to develop the use of coaching strategies to meet the professional development needs of individual members of staff more accurately. You have judged that the assessment system is too complicated and you are considering alternatives that will enable your staff to evaluate and report on pupils' progress more precisely and effectively.
- The management committee supports and monitors the service well through formal meetings and informal visits. Senior leaders provide regular and informative reports on progress and attendance and the use of pupil premium funding. Members demonstrate a strong commitment to the service and are actively involved in discussion of strategic issues and choices. The committee is seeking to strengthen its representation from secondary schools and employers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- closer, more-formal links with subject departments in secondary schools assure the accuracy of assessment and the quality of teaching and the curriculum
- weaker readers receive regular and effective support to increase their comprehension and enjoyment of reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and two members of the management committee. We observed teaching in a sample of classes, some of them jointly with you. We also looked at the learning in pupils' books.

We checked the school's website and examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information and safeguarding records. We took account of five written responses from parents. We also considered 14 responses from staff and five responses from pupils to the Ofsted online questionnaires.