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Mr Clyde Brennan  
Head of Centre  
New River College Primary  
Cloudesley Square  
London  
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Dear Mr Brennan

### **Short inspection of New River College Primary**

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018 with Joy Barter, 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.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. The executive headteacher has remained in post, but all other teaching staff, including yourself, have been appointed over the last year. There is now a stable team. You work with other centres in your group of pupil referral units, so that successful strategies can be shared. You have recently moved into a new building, which was purpose-built for primary pupils. Consequently, pupils have a safe and attractive environment in which to learn.

Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. All staff understand and support your recent focus on improving teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils. Your aim is for pupils to either return to mainstream education or, where more appropriate, to secure a specialist placement which is more able to meet their needs. Since the last inspection, the numbers of pupils attending the centre has increased, and these pupils have increasingly complex needs. Many now have additional diagnoses as well as difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan in place.

Prior to attending the centre, many pupils have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools and are disengaged from education. You have created a positive and nurturing environment, which means that pupils are kept safe and secure and begin to re-engage with education. As your motto states, 'New River, New Start', and this is reflected in the attitudes of all staff. Parents and carers are positive about the centre and feel that their children make progress both in their

academic skills and behaviour.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You, and several other staff, have undertaken designated safeguarding lead training. Consequently, there is always someone available on site, should staff or pupils need to raise a concern. Staff feel well supported by the leadership team and said that leaders are always available to respond to any issues that arise. You ensure that appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out on staff working with pupils.

The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and aware of the challenging context of the provision. You work closely with other agencies to make sure that pupils are kept safe. Referrals are timely and well written. Case files are detailed and well organised. The designated safeguarding lead is proactive in following up concerns to ensure that pupils receive help and protection when they need it.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, which permeates all activities. For example, you carry out home visits when pupils are absent and the family is non-contactable. Staff are well trained and aware of the signs of a pupil at risk. Daily meetings on pupils' well-being give safeguarding a high priority.

### **Inspection findings**

- For the first line of enquiry, we agreed to look at how well leaders support pupils to attend school regularly. Over the last two years, attendance rates have remained stable. Leaders clearly communicate their expectations in relation to attendance to parents and pupils on pupils' entry to the centre. You monitor pupils' attendance very closely so that you can intervene or support as soon as a problem is identified. Leaders use a range of strategies, including working with other agencies when needed, to support families to improve the attendance of pupils. This area of work is given a high priority due to the history of poor attendance of pupils prior to attending the centre.
- The second line of enquiry focused on how much progress pupils are making and how the school uses assessment information to ensure that pupils are learning as well as they should be. Progress in English, mathematics and science is checked regularly along with the progress pupils are making in their behaviour and personal development. When pupils are identified as not making sufficient progress, you discuss this with the class teacher so that further interventions can be put in place.
- Leaders set challenging targets for pupils in English, mathematics and science. However, the needs of the pupils attending the centre has changed since the last inspection. Many pupils now have additional special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Therefore, targets for some pupils are too challenging, based on their complex individual needs and low starting points. This means that systems to monitor progress do not always reliably reflect the progress that pupils are making. We agreed that these systems need to be reviewed and

further refined so that they more effectively capture the progress made by individual pupils.

- We agreed that evidence shows that the progress pupils make in mathematics and science is not as strong as their progress in English. Work in pupils' books suggests that leaders are taking effective action to address this. Teachers are starting to set pupils appropriately challenging work and expect them to aim high. Nevertheless, this work is at an early stage. It is too early to judge whether it will result in pupils making improved progress in mathematics and science over time.
- The areas for improvement at the last inspection have been addressed. Teachers record the small steps of progress that pupils are making and use this information to plan appropriate learning activities. These are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. Teachers and support staff use questioning very effectively, both to deepen pupils' understanding and to support them when they contribute in discussions. Feedback given to pupils is specific so they know what they need to do to improve further. For example, in one class, pupils learning about Venn diagrams were challenged to explain their reasoning. Pupils were able to explain their choices and self-correct errors they had made.
- Our third line of enquiry considered how well staff work together to promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Staff are well trained to support pupils' challenging behaviour. Classrooms are calm and staff work hard, using a range of strategies, to manage behaviour. This enables pupils to focus on their learning. There is a clear behaviour policy, which is implemented consistently by all staff. When physical intervention is required, this is carefully recorded and always reported to parents. Pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions and were able to explain this to inspectors.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning, which was evident in all the classrooms we visited. They were keen to contribute to discussions and take turns on the interactive whiteboard. Pupils talked to each other well during discussions. They were reminded by staff to listen and to take turns appropriately, which they did. Pupils take pride in their work, and this is reflected in the presentation of work in their books.
- Finally, we looked at the curriculum and how well it meets the needs of pupils. You have recently reviewed the curriculum to make it more interesting and relevant. This includes ensuring that all pupils access daily English and mathematics teaching. English lessons include daily guided reading, phonics, spelling and grammar work. A recent focus on improving the teaching of writing has had a direct impact on the progress pupils make. Leaders have identified that teaching and learning in mathematics and science need to be further improved. You have started to address this issue by offering additional training for teachers.
- You have placed a strong emphasis on personal, health and social education, which is a key area, given the needs of the pupils. In one session, we observed pupils exploring their feelings and developing strategies to manage their behaviour when they face challenging situations. When reviewing the curriculum, you consulted pupils. As a result of this, an increase in physical activities has been incorporated into the curriculum at various points of the day. Pupils engage

very well with these activities.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment systems are refined so that they show clearly the individual progress pupils are making, both in their academic work and personal development
- teaching and learning in mathematics and science are strengthened to facilitate good progress for all pupils

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

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Millward  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with senior leaders throughout the day. We visited all classrooms in the school, in conjunction with members of the leadership team. We met with parents, staff and pupils. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to the curriculum and pupil progress information. We looked at the school behaviour logs and data relating to attendance. Inspectors met with the member of staff responsible for safeguarding and reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation. There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors considered the three responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and responses to the staff questionnaire.