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Mr Doug Thomas  
Headteacher  
Chalkhill Education Centre, Chalkhill Hospital  
Princess Royal Hospital Site  
Lewes Road  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH16 4NQ

Dear Mr Thomas

### **Short inspection of Chalkhill Education Centre, Chalkhill Hospital**

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 2017, 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 outstanding in November 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your school continues to be one of the group of schools collectively known as the West Sussex Alternative Provision College. There has been a restructure of the services you provide, since the last inspection. Chalkhill is led and managed on a day-to-day basis by an assistant headteacher. The school continues to have a very mobile group of pupils. Some pupils join you for a few days and some for several weeks. You have maintained the school's strengths since the last inspection.

Chalkhill continues to provide an exceptionally high standard of education for pupils who are very vulnerable. Relationships between adults and pupils are exemplary. Staff have an in-depth understanding of pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils feel listened to. Staff adapt planned learning in response to what they know and understand about pupils' well-being and readiness to learn.

Pupils and parents value the care and education that your school provides. The letters, emails and cards that they send you make very clear that attending Chalkhill can be a life-changing experience for many pupils. A significant proportion of pupils who join the school have been away from education for a while. Some pupils do not feel well enough to attend school or are nervous and reluctant to join lessons. Staff

are very skilled at helping pupils to access learning. Pupils recognise that 'staff never give up on us' and 'try everything they can'.

Leaders and governors have a clear view of what the school does very well and what could be even better. For example, you are currently reviewing your assessment processes. You have a developing system to track pupils' academic progress during their short stay with you. However, you recognise that this approach needs further refining to ensure that staff capture pupils' significant learning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The communication between the hospital's staff and your staff team is exemplary. The handovers between staff groups at the beginning and end of each school day ensure that all relevant information regarding pupils' health and well-being is shared. You have created a culture which ensures that pupils' safety is at the forefront of all adults' minds.

Staff are well trained to listen to pupils. As a result, they report and record carefully any concerns they have about pupils' well-being. Relationships between designated safeguarding leads in the school and in the hospital are very strong. Consequently, referrals to other agencies are swift and all communication is effectively logged.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I looked at: how well the school works with other professionals; the impact that the curriculum has on pupils' personal development and welfare; and how well prepared sixth-form age students are for life after Chalkhill.
- Working relationships with other professionals are excellent. The hospital's staff have the highest regard for your staff. They trust the professional judgements and expertise of your team, for example in the swift identification of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The culture of effective information sharing has a significant impact on pupils' safety and well-being. As one medical professional stated, 'Good data from education is like gold dust and we get it.' You place great importance on the relationships that you have with the schools that pupils are coming from, or going to. As a result of strong relationships, you receive helpful information about pupils' prior learning, and develop careful plans to help pupils return to school, once they have left hospital.
- The curriculum is well planned and responsive to the changing needs of pupils. As a result, it has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and welfare. Medical staff value the flexibility that your staff show in adapting the curriculum to meet the changing needs of pupils. For example, if a topic or theme comes up during the time pupils spend on the ward in the evenings, hospital staff know your team will respond. Staff will create a series of lessons to sensitively

tackle complex issues that emerge. Pupils feel respected. They appreciate the way staff introduce potentially difficult subjects, such as healthy relationships.

- You think carefully about the wide range of trips and visitors that enrich the curriculum. Staff are skilled at linking the planned curriculum to the therapeutic needs of pupils. For example, visiting filmmakers and poets give pupils exciting opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings in a variety of media. This work has a significant positive impact on pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils are grateful that your staff make learning interesting. They greatly appreciate the many opportunities they have to leave the school site.
- You have established an effective system to track the impact that the school's work has on pupils' levels of engagement and well-being, including those pupils who are with you for a short period of time. However, the new system you are developing to track pupils' academic progress needs further time to embed. Staff are not clear enough about what they are recording and how this will be used.
- The support and guidance that you provide for older students have improved since the previous inspection. Staff have a better understanding about the range of opportunities that exist for students through colleges and alternative provisions. As a result, students are now getting appropriate 'taster' sessions and placements when they leave Chalkhill.
- Your structured volunteering programme gives students valuable opportunities to work outside school. Consequently, they develop their social skills and confidence in a range of contexts. The carefully planned programme ensures that students are able to help others in difficult circumstances, for example the homeless and those using food banks. Students place great value on this work and their opportunity to 'give something back' to the wider community.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new system to assess the academic progress of short-stay pupils is used effectively by all staff, in order to record the strong progress pupils make.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the assistant headteacher, a consultant from the hospital, the post-16 lead teacher and the chair of governors to review the school's effectiveness. I accompanied the assistant headteacher to a range of classes and joined the morning handover between the hospital's and school's staff. We evaluated a range of information regarding pupils' progress. I spoke to many pupils, in lessons and in small groups, around the school. I scrutinised two responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and reviewed the correspondence that parents and pupils give you after their stay at Chalkhill. I reviewed nine responses from staff to Ofsted's online survey. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment and met the designated lead for safeguarding.