

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Jackie Addison
Francis Barber Pupil Referral Unit
Franciscan Road
Tooting
London
SW17 8HE

Dear Ms Addison

Short inspection of Francis Barber Pupil Referral Unit

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 2017 with Mary Geddes, 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 your school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is despite significant changes to the leadership team. Your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is honest and accurate. This has supported some key strategic decisions, such as enhancing the pastoral role of the key workers to allow teachers to have a greater focus on teaching and learning.

The school currently has 122 pupils on roll, all of whom have difficulties accessing mainstream education. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 11, almost half achieve five GCSE examination passes. This is despite many having significant gaps in their learning because of negative experiences of school and poor attitudes to education. Academic progress across the school is carefully and regularly tracked and, as a result, leaders are able to accurately identify underachievement in a timely manner. A high proportion of pupils achieve or exceed the targets set when they enter the school. In discussion with me, pupils reported that they like the school and that they make good progress due to the high levels of support and positive relationships with staff.

Staff and parental satisfaction are high, and those parents we spoke to reported that they feel happy with their child's progress. Carefully planned activities and individual counselling programmes mean that pupils' social skills improve significantly during their time at your school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of high quality and well managed. Together, they have established a safe culture that is visible throughout the school. Governors provide effective support and challenge for school leaders around safeguarding, including fortnightly focused meetings to explore current issues and to reflect on practice.

Staff develop very positive and trusting relationships with pupils, based on mutual respect and understanding. All staff receive appropriate and regular safeguarding training, which has ensured that safeguarding responsibilities throughout the school are taken extremely seriously at all times. You work closely with parents and other professionals, including the local police and specialist drug and child sexual exploitation agencies. This is to ensure that your most vulnerable pupils and their families receive a coordinated package of support so that they are helped to be kept safe. Staff use their extensive knowledge of every pupil to meet their individual safeguarding and emotional needs. Leaders and staff monitor vulnerable pupils carefully, and never give up when they feel that a child is not receiving the support that they think the child needs.

The pupils reported that they feel safe and secure in school. For many pupils, this is a real achievement, given their challenges and complex needs. One pupil reported, 'Staff pick up safeguarding really quickly, even something out of school... They check you and work with the police, which we know is a good thing in the long run.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry. This inspection focused on safeguarding, removing barriers to learning, attendance, challenge within lessons and how well the curriculum meets pupils' needs.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms. There is little disruption to learning and parents report that there is no bullying. Pupils appreciate the helpful support and guidance provided by staff and, as a result, they generally behave well in school. Although some can be challenging at times, it is clear that pupils care about themselves, each other and the school.
- Low-level disruptive behaviour is picked up swiftly and behaviour support is generally very positive. One parent reported that his child is 'now participating in school because of the positive approach'.
- Support and guidance from other professionals is effective and used wisely. Consequently, pupils with complex needs and mental health difficulties are well supported to learn new strategies to cope with their emotions. Where pupils are struggling, rather than exclude, you provide specialist support and additional resources to help them to succeed.
- A strong emphasis is placed on building pupils' self-confidence in order to increase their levels of motivation and engagement with learning. Pupils are increasingly able to see challenge as an opportunity, and able to move beyond

their comfort zone. For example, through drama and art, pupils who have previously felt vulnerable and exposed now excel and are able to talk confidently about their progress in these subjects.

- Leaders acknowledge that there are still some inconsistencies around positive behaviour support. They are working effectively to embed a whole-school approach to defusing possible incidents before they arise.
- Your persistent but flexible approach to improving attendance takes account of pupils' particular circumstances while maintaining the highest expectations. Leaders use national attendance figures to ensure that poor attendance is tackled rigorously.
- Because of your highly effective work with other professionals and pupils' families, overall whole-school attendance has improved significantly. The school's information shows that pupils' individual attendance is significantly better than in their previous schools.
- Parents feel that communication between home and school is a strength of the school and that this has a positive impact on attendance. Where pupils do not attend school regularly, parents receive useful information promptly and are then supported to take their own action. This personal approach empowers parents while holding them to account.
- To reduce absence still further, you are reviewing the role of your key workers so that they can use their strong relationships with parents to improve attendance.
- The formal and informal curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain and, as a result, pupils show tolerance and respect for others when speaking about those of different faiths and sexualities.
- Leaders and staff help pupils to identify appropriate next steps that match their strengths and needs. Pupils understand what they need to do to get into college and why this is important if they are to achieve their aspirations.
- Strong links with local schools have enabled all pupils on short-term placements to be successfully reintegrated back into mainstream schools.
- Pupils are motivated by many aspects of the curriculum and enrichment activities because they are tailored to pupils' interests. However, in some activities, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to work on their own.
- The process of staff getting to know pupils' needs and abilities when they arrive at the school is a strength. Information collected from this process enables teachers to plan interesting activities that motivate pupils to achieve well.
- Leaders are acutely aware that in order for pupils to catch up from their low starting points, pupils' progress needs to be accelerated. However, pupils are still not always clear about the standards they are aiming for, and activities are not always set at the correct levels to enable all pupils to access the learning. Consequently, some pupils are not always fully engaged or challenged sufficiently in their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan interesting activities at the correct level and with sufficient challenge so that all pupils can access learning and make substantial progress
- there is a consistent approach to pastoral support that makes better use of a range of information that enables all pupils to achieve excellent outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Francis McDonald-Gonzalez
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, the inspection team held a number of meetings with you and other senior leaders. You accompanied the inspectors on a series of short visits to classrooms. The inspection team held discussions with different leaders about safeguarding, the curriculum, removing barriers to learning and measuring pupils' progress. A meeting was held with three governors, including the chair and the local authority's school improvement adviser. Meetings were also held with a group of pupils and a parent. The inspection team worked with senior leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and pupils' progress information. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included the improvement plan, attendance data, records of pupils' progress and behaviour, and evidence of records to keep pupils safe. The inspection took into consideration 18 responses to the staff survey. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate a meaningful analysis.