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1 March 2013

Mr Mark Gillyon
Principal
Oasis Academy Nunsthorpe
Sutcliffe Avenue
Grimsby
North-East Lincolnshire
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Dear Mr Gillyon

Monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Nunsthorpe whose predecessor school was in a category of concern.

Following my visit with Amraz Ali, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 27 and 28 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the predecessor school was in a category of concern prior to becoming an academy.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, senior leaders, staff, groups of students, the Chair and members of the Academy Council and the Regional Academies Director from Oasis Community Learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all students.

Context

Oasis Academy Nunsthorpe opened in September 2012. It is sponsored by Oasis Community Learning. The academy provides education for students aged 3 to 11 and is larger than most primary schools nationally. Forty three per cent of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals and this is well above the national average. These are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for children in local authority care, those eligible for free school meals and those whose parents are serving in the armed forces). An above average proportion of are supported at school action. The proportion of supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special



educational needs is above average. A higher than average proportion of students join or leave the academy at times other than that normally seen in primary schools.

The Principal was an external appointment; the three assistant principals all held posts at the predecessor school. Since the academy opened there have been various staff changes. The Chair and three other members of the Academy Council were governors at the predecessor school, others are new appointments. The academy makes use of expertise from external consultants who support leadership, literacy and numeracy.

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Academy records show that all groups of students are making progress but it is uneven between groups and classes. This is often due to the quality of teaching and the way teachers use the information available about individual students' abilities when they plan lessons. Nevertheless, progress is being made, more so in reading and mathematics than in writing. Boys make less progress than girls generally, but this picture is reversed in Years 5 and 6. The progress made by students with special educational needs is uneven throughout the academy with gaps between their attainment and national average attainment closing in some places.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have significant weaknesses in some areas of learning when they start the academy. This is especially so in communication and social development. All children make progress but girls making faster progress than boys. Although the classrooms have stimulating displays which support children's language development, displays which help to develop children's mathematical awareness are not as evident.

Students supported by the government's pupil premium funding are quickly improving their progress and the gap between the standards they reach and the national picture is closing. This is because the money is used to provide intervention groups, support additional learning and trips out of the academy.

The progress made by more-able students has improved since the academy opened but this has not been at the same pace as other groups. This is because teachers are not consistently planning or teaching lessons that stretch them.

The quality of teaching

During the first term, leaders have observed lessons regularly. A key focus of these observations is to ensure that all teachers make use of the information about students' abilities when they plan lessons. Improvements are evident but not secure throughout the academy. The strongest teaching ensures lessons proceed at an appropriately brisk pace, include regular questioning to check students' understanding so that more challenge can be instantly provided, and that additional adults in the classroom are deployed properly.

Effective learning takes place, particularly when tasks are linked to students' own experiences and their understanding of the world around them.

Teachers have detailed information of the levels at which students are working. However, too few of them use this information so that all groups, especially the more-able, receive work at the right level. In too many lessons, more-able students make insufficient progress because they have to complete basic tasks before moving onto challenging work.

Inspectors saw too much variation in the quality of marking with some books which had not been marked for a while and when marked, did not provide sufficient guidance to students on how to improve their work. An academy priority is to improve the quality of marking and leaders know that more work is needed. Some students take pride in their handwriting and presentation of their work. Examples of how it should be done are prominently displayed around the academy. Despite this, too often, insufficient attention is paid by some teachers to these important activities.

Students are making more progress in reading than previously, because reading activities and using the newly refurbished library are a regular part of their lessons. However, practices associated with guided reading, where a small group read with an adult, are underdeveloped and taught inconsistently. Students are expected to read regularly and inspectors saw that they enjoy this and use the library out of lesson time so that they can research subjects that interest them. Academy newsletters show that a number of students are taking part in national competitions in order to improve their writing and reading skills. These activities all have a positive impact on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students told inspectors that behaviour, both in classrooms and around the academy, has improved and the use of rewards and sanctions are generally used appropriately. Academy leaders have made improving behaviour a high priority in their drive to raise standards. The impact of this work is very little disruptive behaviour in lessons. When it does occur it is mainly because of weak teaching which causes students to become disengaged because they are not involved in learning. Students are able to work well together as part of a group or in pairs. This attitude, combined with improvements in students' attendance, makes a strong contribution to their improved progress. Students say that they feel safe in the academy but that some bullying takes place. However, they have confidence that poor behaviour of any kind will be dealt with firmly.

The small number of students, who repeatedly misbehave, struggle to follow rules, or need extra help settling into academy life, spend some time in the Horizons unit. Here, they are helped to improve their personal and social skills. However, links between classroom teachers and staff in the unit are not strong. Consequently, insufficient attention is given to improving students' reading, writing and mathematical skills while they are in the unit and this makes it hard for them to join in lessons when they return to class.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The new Principal has communicated high expectations and a clear direction for the academy. As a result, most staff are positive that changes have made a difference. Members of the senior team understand their roles and expectations of them. A well-organised and systematic approach is in place to check the impact of interventions and changes and what else must be done.

Senior leaders use performance-management processes effectively to tackle inadequate teaching and to provide opportunities for staff to observe practice elsewhere. Staff who spoke with inspectors agreed unanimously that they are well supported, challenged and expected to do their best for the students. New monitoring procedures have been agreed. Staff are used to being observed, knowing that feedback will be helpful as they work to improve their teaching. This demonstrates the capacity of senior leaders to improve the academy's effectiveness.

Academy leaders use a new system to record and evaluate students' progress. This enables leaders to identify clearly and quickly which groups of students are achieving well and which are underachieving. Information is shared with staff and used as a basis for meetings about individuals' progress. Securing rapid progress for all groups, particularly the more-able, is work in progress. However, senior leaders can pinpoint precisely where extra help for students is needed and also can check whether it is making a difference.

Members of the academy council understand clearly the issues facing the academy. Improving rapidly the quality of teaching and the progress made by all students in reading, writing and mathematics are top of their list. Being well informed enables them to make a strong contribution, hold leaders to account and question their actions and subsequent impact properly. Together with academy leaders the council ensures that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

External support

Since the academy opened, three consultants have worked in partnership with leaders providing mentoring, especially for those new to their roles, and support for developing literacy and numeracy. Staff welcome this external input and are gaining considerable benefit from the consultants' work which is helping them to deal with the most urgent weaknesses quickly. Clear accountability between academy leaders and the sponsor has been established through their frequent visits. This helps the sponsors to see at first hand where improvements have been made and what still needs to be done.

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen the links between the Horizons staff and classroom teachers so that students improve their reading, writing and mathematical skills as well as their social skills when attending the unit.
- Ensure that the best aspects of guided reading time are shared and used by all staff.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Academy Council and the Academies Group at the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector