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23 May 2013

Mr David Hayes
Headteacher
Oasis Academy Oldham
Hollins Road
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Oldham
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Dear Mr Hayes

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Oldham

Following my visit to your academy on 22 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2012. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State and the Chair of the Academy Council.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers assess students' work accurately and use this information on the progress of individuals and groups to plan activities that closely match the range of learning needs
 - teachers make more precise use of learning objectives to teach specific skills and to evaluate learners' success
 - lessons get off to a quick and interesting start and provide a clear challenge
 - frequent marking consistently identifies specific strengths and targets for improvement.

- Raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science by introducing, and meeting, academy targets that are based on students making at least three or more levels progress from age 11 to 16.

- Eradicate persistent low-level disruption in lessons:
 - by making sure the academy's expectations of behaviour are clear to all staff and students, and that rewards and sanctions are applied consistently by all staff
 - by increasing students' self-esteem, verbal confidence and skills in literacy, and their understanding of how to learn, especially the boys
 - leading to a reduction in temporary exclusions from the academy and from lessons, and contributing to a further reduction of persistent absence.

- Improve the impact of academy's leaders by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching and reducing the proportion that requires improvement, as well as tackling inconsistencies in the quality of leadership through more rigorous performance management and stronger accountability of staff
 - further reviewing and adapting the provision of courses and activities beyond the academy day to better meet students' needs and interests, and more effectively promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - strengthening the role of the academy council in critically questioning the performance of leaders, staff and students and the impact of particular initiatives, such as those funded by the pupil premium.

In addition, the following areas were cited as requiring improvement action in the February 2013 monitoring letter.

- Ensure that the improvement plan identifies how progress will be measured towards meeting success criteria in the short and medium term by adding milestones and evaluative reviews of progress.
- Ensure that middle leaders and teachers are adept in the use of data to set and monitor student progress targets and to intervene effectively when these are not met.
- Embed further current initiatives to improve behaviour and attendance.
- Extend further the training on teaching and learning approaches undertaken with Oasis Academy Limeside so that more teachers and curriculum areas benefit.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 May 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the Principal, other senior leaders, members of staff, the Chair and members of the Academy Council, groups of pupils and a representative of the sponsors. A number of lessons were observed and a learning walk of the academy was undertaken to assess behaviour. Documents summarising actions taken by the academy to promote improvement since the first monitoring visit were scrutinised, including an updated self-evaluation.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection in February 2013, several significant changes have been made to staffing. Two senior staff have left senior management. Three new appointments have been made to the senior leadership team: an associate principal, a deputy principal and a senior pastoral leader. The roles of the senior leadership team have been refocused so as to give a greater emphasis on embedding and promoting improvement and establishing best practice across provision. New subject leaders of mathematics, technology and music have been appointed.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The Principal provides strong leadership with a relentless focus on improvement. He has excellent support from a senior leader seconded for three-days-a-week from another Oasis academy. Together, they have energised staff and students to focus on the building of an 'achievement and aspirational' culture. They are very astute in realising that much still needs to be done. Senior leadership has been strengthened by establishing a greater clarity about roles and responsibilities and in enabling the development of a more challenging senior team ethos. Middle management has been strengthened through new appointments, clearer line management structures and greater accountability. Self-evaluation is clear, accurate and realistic. Systems for tracking and monitoring student progress have been improved. Staff at all levels are more accountable and performance management is robust. Improvement planning and monitoring are sharper.

The academy council has better defined its role and is working very productively with the sponsor. Members of the council now have responsibility to monitor the key areas for improvement noted in the section 5 inspection in November 2012. The council members have developed a very good understanding of the improvement issues facing the academy and robustly challenge the Principal and senior leaders on performance. They convey high commitment to the on-going improvement of the academy.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- More work is required to improve achievement in English and mathematics. However, Year 11 students are currently making better progress and most recent data and results from examinations already taken and marked indicate that there will be a significant improvement at GCSE 5A* to C including English and mathematics in August 2013.

- The quality of teaching and learning is improving. A first group of teachers have completed an extended training course on the way and means to develop better, and innovative, teaching and learning practice. This course is a joint venture and is led by Oasis Limeside Primary Academy. Several of these teachers were observed during the monitoring visit and all lessons were judged good. In these lessons, teachers used resources effectively to extend students' learning and help them to consolidate and stretch their understanding. Lessons started and were conducted at a brisk pace. Students developed confidence through effective questioning and their independent thinking skills were well developed through effectively planned pair and group work. These teachers are now acting as teaching ambassadors across the academy to spread and embed good practice better. A second teacher group starts the course next month. Academy leaders recognise that there remains too much teaching that requires improvement.
- Student behaviour has improved. Students conduct themselves in a more calm and positive manner around the campus and in classes. A new rewards' system has been launched across the academy which has been well received by students. Punctuality and attendance rates have improved and temporary exclusions have been significantly reduced. A new house system is to be introduced shortly to embed further an aspirational and positive learning culture.

Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- Academy leaders acknowledge that further and speedier student progress is required at both Key Stages 3 and 4. In particular, progress requires greater acceleration at Key Stage 3. Changes in curriculum and a greater focus on the development of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills have been introduced in Years 7 and 8 so as to build and develop student learning skills better. These changes now need to be embedded and evidence of impact provided through better student progress.

External support

- Links with other schools and the sponsors' other academies are helping to promote an understanding of best practice. The link with the Oasis Limeside Primary Academy has been further strengthened with that academy's designation as a 'teaching school'. The academy sponsor continues to play a pivotal role in supporting the academy and academy council in promoting and embedding improvement.