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Mrs D Shilston
Headteacher
Orchard Fields Community School
Edmunds Road
Banbury
OX16 0QT

Dear Mrs Shilston

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Orchard Fields Community School

Following my visit to your school on 29 November, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. 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 school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and another member, and a representative from Oxfordshire local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

The Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair are both new to their roles as from September 2013. Other than this there have been no material changes to the context of the school since the inspection in July 2013.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The key reason for the school being judged as having serious weaknesses in July 2013 was that in one case the correct procedure for excluding two pupils had not been followed. School leaders have moved rapidly to address this issue. A revised policy for exclusions was approved by the governing body in September 2013. The local authority provided support with this policy and it fully meets requirements. The Chair of the Governing Body and the governor responsible for safeguarding meet regularly with the headteacher and monitor all aspects of behaviour and safeguarding, including this policy. However, over the course of the current term there have been no fixed-term and no permanent exclusions.

The July inspection also judged that attendance was below the national average and that the level of racist incidents was higher than expected. School leaders have worked to address both issues. Currently the level of attendance this term is 1.5% higher than for the same period last year. The level of persistent absence has fallen sharply. The level of racist incidents has fallen to a low level. More generally, the recorded instances of poor behaviour have fallen by a quarter compared with the same period last year.

The local authority has written a good statement of action that covers all areas which were identified as in need of improvement. The plan makes clear how the local authority will support, monitor and evaluate progress. It contains success criteria and interim targets to measure impact from an early stage. The school's action plan has been written to match the local authority statement of action closely. It indicates the approaches being used and the plans to improve teaching, assessment and standards throughout the school. The plan has the ambition and the strategies to lead to the further rapid improvement of the school.

The governing body has moved to address the weaknesses in governance identified in the July 2013 inspection. There is now a full complement of governors, including parent governors. The recommendations of an independent review of governance have been implemented. Governors have greatly improved their understanding of the progress that pupils make: they understand the progress of different groups of pupils, and also the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement in different subjects. They know how the pupil premium funding is spent and its effectiveness. They understand the process for the management of staff performance better and they are monitoring the current cycle of staff appraisals closely.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour
Additional inspector