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Mr P Humphreys
Headteacher
Oasis Academy Mayfield
Ashley Crescent
Southampton
SO19 9NA

Dear Mr Humphreys

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oasis Academy Mayfield

Following my visit to your school on 2 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, the sponsor and the local Academy Council are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- improve teaching further by:
 - giving more responsibility for their learning to students, thus requiring students to think in more depth in lessons
 - considering more carefully which specific resources or teaching approaches might best suit the expected learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders as well as the Chair of the Academy Council, which provides local governance. I met some students and spoke by telephone with the relevant regional director of the Oasis Academy Trust. You and I toured the academy together, visiting lessons in many subjects. I also evaluated documentation, including the academy's improvement plans, a recent

Department for Education review and information about how well students are achieving.

Context

Since my last visit, a new and experienced associate principal has joined the academy. You have restructured the senior academy leadership team, which also includes two assistant principals.

Main findings

You acknowledge that much remains to be done to make the academy securely good. Nevertheless, under your very effective leadership, well supported by the new senior team, the academy is in a different and certainly better place than it was at the time of my visit in June 2014. The changes in the academy leadership team provide greater capacity for senior leaders to work with members of staff to make improvements. The skills of the senior leaders complement each other well and each member of the team is clear about his or her responsibilities. As a result, you have together been able, importantly, to develop the work of middle leaders, including heads of subjects. These staff are more accountable and have much better opportunities to improve the areas for which they are responsible.

The academy's self-evaluation is very accurate. I much appreciated our honest and useful discussions. It was good to hear, for example, that students entitled to the support of pupil premium funding are generally doing at least as well as similar students nationally. The gap between their achievement and that of their classmates is narrowing. As at my last visit, I enjoyed meeting some of the students. They were polite, behaved well and were happy to talk about their views of the academy. They were very honest in highlighting what they like about the academy and what they think can still become better. Rightly, you have used the students' voice effectively in your self-evaluation.

The academy's main strategic plan is a model of clarity. You are systematically working towards its overarching and visionary objectives. The plan contains very sharp and positive strategies for achieving its goals. Systems, such as those for managing the performance of staff, dovetail tidily with the strategic plan and create a clear and palpable sense of purpose right across the academy.

As a result, teaching has notably improved. Our visits to classrooms supported your view that teachers now have much higher expectations of students and that lessons are better structured and organised. In all the lessons we visited together, there were purposeful activities. The lessons were paced appropriately. Staff set students what appeared to be suitably demanding work. Students and staff enjoyed constructive relationships. The marking that I saw led to students making

improvements to their work. However, in that sample of work, students' handwriting and presentation required improvement.

We agreed that there are aspects of teaching which still need to be improved. Too often, when talking to their classes and asking questions, teachers did not ensure that all students were paying attention and fully involved. Teachers sometimes answered their own questions when it would have been more effective to expect students to do more of the thinking for themselves. Occasionally, therefore, some students lost interest and motivation, realising they could take it easy and not work as hard as they should.

Now that teachers' expectations of students are higher, they need to choose the best teaching approaches, and the most useful resources, to suit the learning that is planned. You feel that staff need to build their confidence in making selections from a repertoire of teaching methods and a wider range of resources, such as artefacts, photographs and the outdoor area, to suit the intended learning and get the best from students.

Further improvement in teaching should help reduce the academy's reliance on interventions and catch up sessions in Years 10 and 11. It should also improve further the performance of different student groups, including those who are higher attaining. Rightly, you see the needs of more-able students as a priority.

The academy is continuing to develop its curriculum and assessment practice, which is rightly focused in Key Stage 3. You base this well in research evidence and by usefully working with a network of schools. Staff receive useful training and enjoy regular opportunities to work and study together.

In 2014, the percentage of students achieving five good GCSEs including English and mathematics reduced. This headline figure fell to 38% which is below the government's minimum floor target. In large part, this fall was due to a mix up over examinations in information communications technology that the students had, in fact, passed, but which did not count towards the figure. The error was the academy's, at a time of change in staffing. Lessons have been learned. Positively, at the same time, GCSE results in mathematics and English, and the progress made by students in these subjects, improved considerably. The academy's current data indicates that further improvements are likely in 2015, and across more subjects.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The academy's main source of support is its sponsor: the Oasis Trust, which also holds the formal governance responsibilities. You feel well supported and firmly challenged by the regional director to whom you are accountable. The governance of the academy is enhanced by the local Academy Council, which is well led and clear about its role and purpose. Its work dovetails well with that of the Oasis Trust. Its Chair has much useful insight into many of the areas still requiring improvement. I am pleased to see that the academy is productively involved with other schools in Southampton city and the local authority.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Academy Council, the Director of Children's Services for Southampton and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector