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Ms Fiona O'Sullivan
Principal
Oasis Academy MediaCityUK
King William Street
Salford Quays
Manchester
M50 3UQ

Dear Ms O'Sullivan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy MediaCityUK

Following my visit with Dawn Platt, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 3 and 4 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This inspection was part of a focused inspection of academies in the Oasis multi-academy trust.

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

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint one newly qualified teacher only to the English department.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Academy Council, the Chief Executive of Oasis Community Learning and the Director of Children's Services for Salford.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy, but especially in Key Stage 3, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers, including those in the school temporarily, continue to develop their subject knowledge and teaching skills to ensure that they are able to teach their subjects with confidence and engage students appropriately
 - teachers focusing in lessons on developing students' skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject rather than merely completing tasks
 - ensuring that students' work is marked regularly, is of high quality and informs them how they can improve and checks whether they have acted on previous advice.

- Raise the progress and achievement of all students across all subjects, but especially in mathematics and across Key Stage 3, by:
 - making sure, as a matter of urgency, that staffing is stabilised to prevent further delays in driving through improvements in order to ensure that provision for students, especially in teaching, is improved
 - making sure that teachers plan opportunities to stretch the most able students and also meet the needs of those who require additional help
 - providing more opportunities for students to develop their skills in mathematics and writing, in other subjects
 - giving higher level, more demanding work to the most able students
 - using questioning more effectively to challenge and engage students and encourage them to develop their reasoning and extend their thinking
 - ensuring that students develop a pride in the presentation and quality of their work.

- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
 - eradicating poor behaviour in lessons to ensure that students' opportunities to learn are not compromised through noisy and persistent disruption
 - ensuring that poor behaviour around the school is challenged and dealt with appropriately according to agreed procedures
 - ensuring that safeguarding procedures are followed to ensure that students' safety is not compromised.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management at all levels by:
 - developing systems to ensure that all aspects of the academy's work are rigorously monitored and evaluated to provide a secure basis for coherent planning which is firmly focused on making improvements
 - taking swift action to eradicate weak teaching

- developing middle leaders' skills so that they have the knowledge and expertise to be able to offer advice to their colleagues on how to improve their classroom practice
- making sure performance management links teachers' pay progression more closely to improvements in the classroom and to improved outcomes for students
- ensuring that the impact of funding, including the pupil premium, is spent wisely and is seen to be improving standards and provision in the academy
- ensuring that there are procedures in place to provide independent checks about the impact of the actions being taken by leaders in the school to improve the academy
- ensuring that statutory reporting and information requirements for the website are put in place.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 3 to 4 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised documents. They held meetings with the Principal and other senior leaders, groups of four middle leaders and other staff including five teachers and three other members of staff. Inspectors met formally with different groups of eight and nine students and had informal conversations with others during the academy's day. Meetings were held with representatives of the sponsor, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Academy Council which acts as the local governing body. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight lessons. Inspectors visited a staff meeting which included a short training activity. On the first day of the inspection, inspectors observed students in four different activities which formed part of a 'health day'. This provided students with a range of different learning opportunities all based around a broad theme of health.

Context

Since the previous inspection a deputy Principal, a special educational needs coordinator and five other teachers have joined the academy. The majority of teachers of English are new to the academy. A further three teachers and one member of support staff, including two teachers of mathematics, are expected to join the academy after the Easter holiday. Eight teachers have left the academy.

The academy council which was being re-established at the time of the previous inspection has met regularly.

Building work to improve the safeguarding and safety of students has been completed. This has included a new reception area and better security on doors into the academy.

The academy development plan has been revised and reissued and a new timetable for students introduced.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The nationally published results for Year 11 students show that achievement fell in 2014. However, the academy's own tracking indicates that achievement is now increasing. Inspectors saw evidence of faster learning in some of the students' work examined and this was also confirmed in discussion with students. While this improvement is happening across the school, considerable variability remains with, for example, achievement in mathematics remaining lower than in English. The higher achievement in English reflects the more effective teaching now taking place. There has been sustained improvement and the academy's own data indicate that

students' achievement in English is now close to the national average. The starting points in mathematics were much lower than in English and, while some improvement is evident, much still needs to be done.

The current achievement of disadvantaged students broadly matches the achievement of other students. This represents a large reduction in the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and others seen in 2014.

Leaders have focused additional teaching and changes to the curriculum on students in Year 11 and, to a lesser extent, in Year 10. These changes have helped teachers to speed up students' progress. The new timetable has provided longer lessons and more time overall for English, mathematics and science. Other subjects have lessons planned in the afternoon so that they can be extended into additional after-school sessions. In the past, there was competition between subjects for after-school learning time. The new arrangements mean that additional learning in one subject does not detract from time allocated to others.

Students' literacy and extended writing are often weak when compared to that seen for students of similar ages elsewhere. Leaders have ensured that the changes to the academy timetable have not been at the expense of the broad Key Stage 3 curriculum. They have made changes to develop students' literacy skills and ensure that teaching is as effective as possible.

Some of the most able students say that, while behaviour is improving, low-level disruption sometimes hinders their learning.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving as a result of talented teachers new to the academy being appointed, closer monitoring and training which are helping all teachers to develop their skills. However, teaching varies in its effectiveness between and within different subject areas.

The new deputy Principal has ensured that the quality of teaching is closely monitored. This includes the scrutiny of students' work. This scrutiny shows that much marking is not fit for purpose and written dialogue between students and teachers in exercise books is rarely used. This means that an opportunity to help students learn is missed. The exercise books seen by inspectors indicate that marking has improved this term and that more effective practice is beginning to develop. Exercise books also confirm the variable rates of progress made by different students. Some exercise books show that students do not put in sufficient effort or have enough pride in their work.

Training for teachers is comprehensive. All new staff receive induction training and are included in the regular programme of training on teaching and learning. This

includes weekly sessions on effective teaching and learning, and opportunities for sharing good ideas and approaches. Inspectors saw a middle leader sharing effective practice used in science in a staff meeting. Highly effective teachers from the teaching schools are working with individual teachers to develop their teaching and leadership skills. The training offered has covered a wide range of teaching skills but teachers do not always apply these with consistent effectiveness. For example, inspectors saw the teacher of a Year 10 English lesson skilfully using questions to build students' understanding; however, this kind of approach was not always seen elsewhere.

Some teachers' expectations of students' achievement and behaviour remain too low. This leads to slower progress in lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in the academy is improving as expectations have been raised and a culture of learning re-established. Inspectors saw students generally behaving well in their social time. Students who spoke to inspectors said that there was very little bullying and, if any should occur, they were confident about who to speak to. Students were polite and friendly in their conversations with inspectors. The academy's structures for pastoral support mean that students are well cared for.

While students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons have improved, they are not consistently good enough. Where teaching is effective, students listen carefully, try hard and learn well. However, where teaching is less effective, students do not always work as hard as they should and some are disruptive. In these lessons, teachers' expectations are too low and lack of effort, graffiti and doodling in exercise books and even rudeness are not adequately challenged. Students explained that they find it harder to behave well when they have had a number of different teachers. Students also said that their behaviour has improved and identified that having fewer temporary teachers has helped their learning. Leaders must continue to develop students' confidence by ensuring that staffing continues to become more stable and that temporary teachers receive the support they need. In addition, teachers must not accept any excuses for poor behaviour and must continue to raise expectations.

While attendance is below the national average, it is starting to improve, particularly in Years 9 and 11. This is as a result of improved systems which include better use of data to track attendance and closer contact with parents. This ranges from letters home if absence increases to formal discussion meetings if there are long-term problems. The changes to the timetable mean that Year 11 students know they have to be in school on time to make the most of the opportunities offered.

The academy is safe and secure. Students say they feel safe. The changes to the reception area mean that visitors are more easily checked and that it is harder for students to leave school unnoticed.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The Principal and other senior leaders have a good understanding of the challenges the academy faces. They continue to demonstrate a deep commitment to the improvement of the academy so that it can provide the best for its students. Their actions are based on clear principles and they continue to have the support of staff and others involved with the academy. The appointment of the new deputy Principal has enabled leaders to speed up the academy's improvement.

The academy development plan has been rewritten and is now fit for its purpose. It provides a systematic and staged programme for improvement. The plan's layout allows progress to be closely monitored. There is less emphasis on the evaluation of what difference the actions being taken are making. However, the plan is used within a rigorous system of internal and external review. This ensures that leaders know not only whether the desired outcomes have been achieved but also if they have made the difference expected. The plan could be refined further by ensuring the identification of completed actions identifies each separate part. This would then allow completed parts to be celebrated and any at risk of falling behind schedule to be more easily identified.

Leaders have taken firm action to improve teaching and it is consequently improving. New teachers have been appointed, well-planned training for teachers is offered with additional support where needed. If teaching remains less effective leaders take further action. There remains a need, however, to check that training is fully effective in helping those teachers appointed for a short-term. Leaders have ensured that teachers have been set very clear targets as part of the academy's system for checking on teachers' performance. These relate to the highest priorities for improvement across the academy.

The skills of middle leaders have been developed through the training provided. Senior leaders have ensured that there is strong challenge and clear accountability through, for example, regular meetings with middle leaders. These help leaders to check on the progress of individual students and plan what actions may be needed to ensure they remain on track.

The academy's website provides information about safeguarding and safety which is accessible to students and their parents. The single central record of employment checks meets requirements.

The Chair of the Academy Council has a clear vision for how the council should contribute to the leadership of the academy. The council represents the academy's

internal and external community well because members have been appointed who represent the breadth of people involved. The members are linked to important areas of the academy's work which means that the scrutiny of those areas is deeper. The review of governance recommended in the section 5 inspection has been completed for governance across the whole of Oasis Community Learning (OCL). It has led to new guidance for its academy councils on expectations and effective practice.

External support

OCL is providing strong support and effective challenge to the academy. The Chief Executive and other representatives of OCL have regular meetings with the Principal in which the academy's work is scrutinised. OCL's National Director for Academy Improvement leads half-termly reviews of the academy. The findings of the reviews are used to refine the academy's planning. OCL's wider commitment to the academy includes professional advice concerning personnel matters and additional financial support. OCL also provides less formal arrangements for discussion and challenge between Principals and other members of staff across the multi-academy trust.

The academy continues to work with three teaching schools: Blessed Thomas Holford Roman Catholic College Teaching School, Innovation To Oasis Teaching School Alliance and St Patrick's, Salford. The Principal has carefully coordinated the training and support offered by each of the teaching schools to ensure that there is no overlap. Senior leaders and teachers recognise the help that the teaching schools are providing in helping the academy to improve.

Senior leaders have developed links between the academy and community representatives and organisations. For example, a police officer has recently been deployed to work at the academy full time and links with Salford Red Devils Rugby League Club and Salford University are now well established. Approximately 30 colleagues from a range of external organisations supported the academy's 'Health Day' on the first day of this inspection. This enabled academy staff to provide learning that was firmly linked to 'real-world' experiences.