

18 June 2015

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 Lynne Selkirk, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 16 and 17 June 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 third 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.

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 strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs). However, up to three NQTs employed and supported by Oasis Community Learning (OCL) may be deployed at the academy. These NQTs should teach only English, technology or humanities subjects.

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 Strategic 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 third monitoring inspection on 16 to 17 June 2015.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised documents. They held meetings with the Principal and other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, groups of four middle leaders and other staff including two teachers and four other members of staff. Inspectors met formally with a group of 14 students and had informal conversations with others during the academy's day. Meetings were held with representatives of the sponsor and the Chair and vice-Chair of the Academy Council which acts as the local governing body. A separate meeting was held with the chaplain who is also a member of the academy council. An inspector spoke by telephone to the headteacher of one of the teaching schools which works in partnership with the academy. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons including one observation conducted jointly with the deputy Principal. An inspector scrutinised a sample of students' books jointly with the deputy Principal and inspectors examined other books during visits to lessons. Inspectors visited a staff meeting which included a short training activity.

During this inspection, Year 11 students were on study leave and students in other years were completing formal examinations. An inspector visited a Year 7 English examination.

Context

Since the previous inspection, five teachers have joined the academy. Two teachers have left the academy and three are on long-term absence. Plans are in place for a further six teachers to join the academy later this term or after the summer holiday. At that stage, it is expected that all teaching vacancies will be filled by permanent appointments.

A new plan for how much time subjects are allocated has been developed and, in line with this, subject leadership has also been reorganised. A new structure for the care of students has been introduced. Additional support for some students has been made available through a new learning support unit. The responsibilities of members of the academy's administration team have been clarified and new appointments made including of a business administration manager and a facilities manager.

The timetable for Year 10 students has recently been changed to provide more learning time in English and mathematics.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Achievement continues to increase although there is variability in how well students learn.

The academy's own data indicate that there are significant increases in the attainment and progress of current Year 11 students when compared to similar students last year. The proportion of students expected to gain five or more good GCSE passes including in English and mathematics is expected to be above the standard considered acceptable by the government. The proportion of students making expected progress and more than expected progress in English broadly matches the national average seen in 2014. However, while students are making faster progress in mathematics, this is still slower than national

expectations. Leaders are confident that the data on students' achievement are accurate because they have continued to ensure that there is rigorous checking of teachers' assessment between teachers in the academy and with other schools.

The faster achievement has been supported by additional teaching in English and mathematics for all students and further teaching for any students who were still learning more slowly than others. These systems are beginning to be introduced for other year groups. The timetable for Year 10 students has already been reorganised in preparation for Year 11. In addition, the timetable for all students for next year is being written to ensure that key subjects have the teaching time needed to help students do as well as possible.

The achievement of disadvantaged students has continued to improve in line with others. The current data indicate that, when compared to the results in 2014, the average attainment of both groups is about one grade higher. Where gaps in achievement are still apparent, leaders are taking action to close them. For example, they have identified that girls do better than boys in Key Stage 4. In response, leaders and teachers have talked with the parents of boys who are not doing as well as they should to discuss how their sons can be encouraged to do better. Gaps between the achievement of Key Stage 3 students in English and mathematics are closing.

Leaders identify that the achievement of students in lessons remains variable. As during the previous monitoring inspection, this variability was seen in inspectors' observation of teaching and learning. Where teachers' high expectations of students' behaviour and learning are explicit, students make faster progress. In contrast, where instances of low level disruption are not consistently challenged, the learning of all students slows. Students' books also confirm considerable variability in the amount students learn over time.

The number of students whose main language is not English and are still at an early stage of learning English has increased. Inspectors saw clear evidence of rapid learning for these students in their written work. However, many students' literacy levels continue to be lower than those of similar ages elsewhere.

The quality of teaching

Leaders continue to ensure that teachers appointed to the academy bring skills and talents. This has continued to contribute to overall improvement in teaching. However, despite this improvement, variability remains and too much teaching does not lead to sufficiently rapid learning.

Teachers' morale is high. Teachers contribute to, and learn from, training and other activities designed to improve teaching. Leaders have not been able to provide extensive opportunities for teachers to see highly effective teaching practice; wisely, unless essential, leaders have been reluctant to disrupt learning by releasing teachers from their classes during the academy day to visit other schools. Within the academy, while the amount of effective teaching has been slowly building up, there has been insufficient to provide different examples of how teachers can help students learn really well. Teachers have shared examples of interesting approaches they have taken and training has given information about wider aspects of teaching. However, teachers now need to bring such elements together in their practice to ensure that consistently good learning follows.

Scrutiny of students' work by senior leaders and during this inspection indicates that the necessary improvement to marking is still at an early stage. While some teachers are giving more feedback to students and some comments provide more challenge, too few teachers are using the opportunities provided by their marking to help students learn more. Too many teachers do not challenge scruffy or incomplete work well enough. Plans are in place to concentrate on this aspect of teachers' assessment early next term.

During this inspection, inspectors saw examples of rapid learning being supported by good relationships and high expectations. When these were in place, the teacher was able to share their passion for their subject, take every opportunity to build students' knowledge and make their learning meaningful and enjoyable. These characteristics were seen in a Year 8 food technology lesson where the teacher ensured that students' skills were developed, expectations about why it is important to listen to instructions were reinforced and students' wider knowledge was developed. Similarly, English teachers' work in preparing all Year 7 students for an examination was tightly focused on students' needs, had purpose and emphasised what was expected.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students and teachers report that behaviour in the academy is continuing to improve although they still say that behaviour is not yet as good as it should be. Action has been taken to help students who find it hard to behave well, for example, through the work of the new learning support unit.

Inspectors saw students behaving well during break and lunchtimes. Students talked together sensibly and harmoniously. However, some students lack sufficient self-control. This leads to occasional boisterous behaviour when they move around the academy. Leaders are ensuring that next year's timetable will, as far as possible, reduce students' movement between lessons. Inspectors witnessed some swearing and occasional unpleasant comments between students were heard. This contrasts with the views of the students who talked with an inspector; they said that students respect each other and emphasised that racist language is not used by students in the academy. They also confirmed, as in the previous monitoring inspection, that there is very little bullying and that any which happens is dealt with quickly. However, leaders are not complacent and the academy has embarked on a national scheme to recognise the academy's work in combating the possibility of bullying and increasing students' safety.

Many students have positive attitudes towards the academy and their learning; however, a minority do not behave well enough in lessons. Where teaching meets students' needs and helps them learn quickly, they respond by behaving well. The inspector who visited the Year 7 examination saw students working hard and behaving well. Some students lack sufficient confidence that teachers will give them the best possible deal, for example, their concerns that teachers will leave the academy after a short period of time continue. Some teachers lack confidence that students will cooperate as well as is needed to ensure that all can learn well. It continues to be essential for leaders and teachers to build further confidence in all aspects of the academy's work in line with its growing success and effectiveness.

While leaders have ensured that expectations have continued to rise, expectations need to be raised further. For example, some teachers still accept untidy work and do not consistently challenge students to pay full attention or to stop talking while the teacher is giving information or instructions. Over a third of the students in a Year 7 class did not have their own pen. To make matters worse, this was on a day when those students had an examination. While this was handled well by their teacher, it inevitably used some learning time.

The better systems to ensure students attend well continue to be used consistently. The improved attendance identified in the last monitoring inspection has continued. Any long-term absence is carefully investigated by academy staff and, where necessary, robustly followed up with parents. The proportion of students who receive a register code indicating that they are receiving off-site education is lower than in the previous academy year. This demonstrates leaders' good understanding of how this code should be used and, because it is clear where each student is, increases their safety.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The Principal and other senior leaders continue to demonstrate principled determination for the academy to continue its improvement and give the most benefit to its students and their wider community. The increasing size of the senior leadership team has allowed its members to spend less time reacting to challenging events as they happen and more on planning for the academy to do the best it possibly can. An additional senior leader has recently been appointed. Her role includes the leadership of mathematics.

The Principal is held in high regard by her colleagues across the academy. She has led the improvement seen this year with care and consideration but has not shied from determined and rigorous action when needed.

Senior leaders have used their well-developed understanding of what the academy needs for the next stage of its improvement to decide on a number of initiatives for next academy year. They are aware that the different activities need to be carefully planned for and managed to ensure that they happen quickly and smoothly without slowing the rate of improvement even in the short term. Leaders have added information to the current improvement plan to demonstrate how much effect their actions are having. This process could be further enhanced by ensuring that the overall impact of actions is analysed in even more detail to understand what makes the most difference and then build on this in further planning.

The roles of middle leaders have been reorganised. Subject leaders have better defined responsibilities and clearer roles in ensuring that teaching and learning in their subjects are as effective as possible. Pastoral leaders have been appointed to ensure that students are cared for well. Subject leaders identify that the changes to administration staff roles have helped them to concentrate on the quality of teaching and learning in their areas. Planning for next academy year includes training which is closely matched to leaders' roles.

The academy council has further developed its work. Academy council members continue to deepen their understanding of the academy and how well it is doing, for example, through their visits to see the academy at work. They then use this information to check that leaders

are working effectively. Members of the academy council have a shrewd and honest understanding of the academy's progress. They share in leaders' commitment for it to improve rapidly.

External support

OCL continues to provide strong support and robust challenge to the academy. A new regional director for secondary academies has been appointed and she is working closely with other members of OCL and academy leaders. OCL's half-termly reviews of the academy's effectiveness provide detailed and accurate information which proves helpful in ensuring that the academy's improvement remains on track. The academy uses its links with other OCL academies to enhance subject leadership, check the accuracy of teachers' assessment and improve teaching. As the improvement in the academy continues, OCL is starting gradually to reduce the support it offers.

The academy is now working with two teaching schools; St Patrick's School, Salford and Oasis Innovation Teaching School Alliance. This work has included direct support for leadership in subjects where achievement is not good enough.

Senior leaders have further developed the academy's links with community organisations and local businesses. These are adding to students' learning in, for example, the weekly commitment of a chef from a local restaurant to supporting students' cooking skills. Contact with both Manchester and Salford Universities are being used to inspire all students and make them aware of the opportunities available. Plans are in place for students on appropriate university courses to be placed at the academy and assist with providing care for students.