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3 July 2015

Mrs Tina Bissett
Oasis Academy Hextable
Egerton Avenue
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Dear Mrs Bissett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oasis Academy Hextable

Following my visit to your academy on 3 July 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 first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Academy Council and a representative of the sponsor to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You led me on a tour of the school and showed me samples of students' work. You presented me with a good range of the academy's information which shows how you are addressing each of the areas for improvement.

Context

Since the inspection, work has continued to support the successful transition of students to their new schools. Only a small group of boys in Year 9, and students in the current Years 10 and 12 remain. No new members of staff have joined the school and 30 will leave at the end of term.

Main findings

You are taking effective action to address the issues raised at the last inspection alongside the necessary work to close the academy down as smoothly as possible. You are continuing to ensure that students do as well as they can with a much reduced number of teachers. You are also planning carefully to ensure that students in Years 11 and 13, in the academic session 2015-2016, will not experience any negative impact on their learning or progress as a result of the planned closure. You have managed to retain a small group of staff who are able to teach effectively the remaining parts of the courses followed by these students.

Students in Year 11 will complete a broad range of subjects, some leading to GCSE qualifications, and others, awards at BTEC level 2 (vocational). Students in the sixth form will complete studies in the three A level courses available or the six level 3 vocational awards.

The cohort remains predominantly White British. The information you provided showed that this group is likely to achieve results better than a similar cohort that entered examinations in 2014. However, these students are still doing less well than their peers in other schools nationally. As a significant group in the academy, these lower levels of attainment are part of the reason why standards are not as high overall as they should be. You and your staff make every effort to provide strong pastoral support to these students. They are learning to become more resilient in their studies. You are also working to raise their aspirations and show them good examples of careers or further education opportunities. This is giving them an increased sense of how much they can achieve.

You know each of the students well, as do your staff. You are making good use of the increased time for one-to-one working made possible by the reduction in student numbers. As a result students are benefitting from direct tuition and greater levels of support. Consequently they are attaining more, faster. You plan to work even more directly in this way from September.

You showed me evidence of a wide range of interventions to raise achievement for all students, put in place since the inspection. Many of these were underway from the start of the year but you have re-doubled the effort in the last few months. Much of this work focuses on developing students' literacy. The impact of this is starting to be seen in students' work and their oral contributions in lessons. Most classrooms have clear signs of support for literacy development. You are aware that not all teachers will be teaching their specialist subject in September. You are checking teachers' work regularly now and have systems in place to address any weaknesses that might emerge. However, you expressed great confidence in the staff who have chosen to remain with the academy in its last year. Some of these teachers were leading learning well during my tour of the academy. In particular they were asking students challenging questions to quicken the pace of their learning. You have provided good training for the teachers to aid their questioning and its impact is

clear. For instance, in the sample of work seen, students were prompted to write more lengthy and fuller answers. In one case, a teacher had provided simple starters to sentences which the student had completed in great detail.

Marking is increasingly challenging students to write accurately and at length. In the samples of work you provided, all teachers were seen to be following the school's clear policy. The most able students were taking the time to respond to this marking by adding more to their work or correcting mistakes. Others are building on teacher's advice so that their work is improving with each new version. This was most noticeable in subjects leading to BTEC awards. The simple 'My Response Is' (MRI), has proved to be a quick way of teachers making students think carefully about how their work can be better.

Attendance remains a problem. Girls attend less well than boys. You have tried a range of methods to improve attendance but there are some families who are not cooperative. Further work needs to be done to ensure that the penalties of not attending the academy more regularly are understood by the students and their parents or carers.

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

External support

The academy has received good support from the local authority. The academy has welcomed the services of a school improvement advisor who has already provided a range of services to the school. You also make as good use as you can of support from the education welfare service. Of particular note is the work undertaken in partnership with local authority officers to develop productive relationships with other schools locally. As a result you have been able to ensure each student in Years 7, 8 and 9 finds a suitable place at a new school. These arrangements have been managed carefully.

The academy receives good quality and extensive support from the sponsor. Sponsorship comes from Oasis Community Learning, a multi academy trust (MAT). Officers of the MAT see the academy as part of the 'family', and thus have provided expertise as needed. For example, you have received help with planning the school's finances, reducing the size of the staff sensitively and ensuring 'business as usual' for the students who remain. Teachers have been given support to improve their teaching so that students' learning improves. The MAT has exercised skill, care and sensitivity in its work to bring the operation of the academy to a close.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Academy Council, the Director of Children's Services for Kent, The Department for Education and The Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector