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9 December 2015

Mr Dan Morrow  
Principal  
Oasis Academy Skinner Street  
Skinner Street  
Gillingham  
Kent  
ME7 1LG

Dear Mr Morrow

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Skinner Street**

Following my visit to your academy on 24 and 25 November 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March and April 2015.

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

### **Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.  
The academy's development plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the acting chair of the academy council, the Regional Academy Director, the Chief Executive of Oasis Academy

Learning and the Director of Children's Services for Medway. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Abigail Birch  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March and April 2015**

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the early years, so that all pupils make good or better progress and standards rise, by ensuring that:
  - teachers set challenging and engaging work for all pupils, especially the most able
  - feedback to pupils clearly identifies what pupils need to do in order to improve their work
  - teachers consistently build pupils' ability to write in sentences and develop their vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting skills
  - activities in early years are purposeful and clearly linked to developing children's skills
  - the teaching of phonics is more effective in building pupils' early reading skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
  - clear targets and measures for evaluating success are set in the academy's action plans
  - actions are taken regularly and thoroughly to confirm they are having a positive impact on standards
  - areas of weakness identified in teaching are followed up thoroughly to ensure they are eradicated quickly
  - leaders rapidly tackle poor attendance and persistent absenteeism with all the means available to them in order to improve outcomes for all pupils
  - the academy council and executive board challenge the academy's performance more rigorously and hold leaders firmly to account.

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 academy'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 first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 November 2015**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, Regional Academy Director, Acting Chair of the Academy Council, Director of Academy Improvement (Primary) and members of the academy's senior and middle leadership team. The inspector also met with a group of pupils. Teaching and learning was observed in all classes and pupils' work in books was examined. The trust's statement of action and the academy's development plan were evaluated. A range of school documents were scrutinised.

### **Context**

Changes to the leadership and management of the academy have been substantial, including the appointment of a new Principal who joined the academy in June. A deputy principal, responsible for curriculum, learning and teaching, joined the academy in September. Five members of staff, two of whom held leadership positions, left before the summer break and four teachers joined the academy, including the deputy principal. The number of pupils who attend the academy has increased and the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language has also risen. The academy has been redecorated and the staff car park turned into extra playground space.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils' early reading skills are showing signs of improvement. There was a significant increase in the proportion of Year 1 pupils who achieved the expected levels in early reading skills (known as phonics screening) during the summer term. Pupils are beginning to apply sounds in their writing to help them to spell words accurately. There are encouraging signs that pupils are using dictionaries and a thesaurus to help them to spell and improve their vocabulary. In a Year 2 class, a pupil correctly spelled the word 'unhygienic' when thinking about words to describe Mr Twit's beard! In Reception, children are beginning to link letters and sounds, but there is little evidence of them doing so as a matter of course.

The proportion of children in early years reaching a good level of development improved last year and now reflects the national average. Key Stage 1 pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are improving. However, standards remain well below average. Few pupils achieved the highest available levels, particularly in writing, at the end of Key Stage 1.

Standards in Key Stage 2 dropped in 2015 and continue to be below the national average. Encouragingly, however, the academy met floor standards (the minimum standard expected) because the rate of progress made by the pupils in Year 6 last

year across Key Stage 2 in reading and writing was faster than the national average. These pupils did less well in mathematics. The gap widened between those eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) and other pupils nationally. Few pupils achieved the highest levels of attainment in Year 6 in writing and mathematics last year.

Observations in lessons and work in pupils' books show that pupils have a lot of ground to cover in order to reach the standards expected for their age. There are improvements in presentation which are particularly visible in Year 5 and Year 6. Pupils across the academy are beginning to use a wider range of words than previously to make their writing more exciting and there are early signs that sentences are becoming more complex because pupils are adding clauses, metaphors and similes, for example. Pupils are increasingly able to write in sentences, demonstrating an improving use of punctuation, although this is not consistently so across all classes.

However, because expectations about the pitch and the pace of learning remain too low, there is little evidence that standards are rising quickly, including for the most able, because there is not enough pupils' work in their books and folders. Pupils are not given enough opportunity, nor are they expected, to produce sufficient work. For example, sometimes even the oldest pupils have to wait for confirmation from an adult before they can copy one sentence from a whiteboard into their books. This slows them down.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. Teachers are giving pupils more strategies to help them to improve their work. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, pupils used an online dictionary and thesaurus, collaborative talk, 'phone a friend' and 'challenge the teacher' to improve their writing. These strategies are developing throughout the academy. Because of this, pupils are beginning to understand how to improve their work. However, sometimes, teachers use these strategies too much and interrupt learning too often, which prevents pupils from being able to write for longer periods to apply and embed what they know. In some lessons, especially in phonics, learning moves at pace because activities are well structured, modelled, rehearsed and assessed so that learners are ready to learn and are clear about how to improve. However, sometimes adults do too much and the pupils are not able to get on and do enough on their own.

Staff use the same language of 'golden' to describe their expectations of what pupils produce in their learning and in their behaviour. For example, pupils explained that they sometimes think of words that are even better than 'golden' and these are known as 'diamond' words.

Teachers are beginning to help pupils to make links in their learning. This is particularly evident in the early years where activities are matched well to themes and allow children to develop skills across all areas of learning. During this visit, children in the early years enjoyed a range of activities based on rockets. They built them, made them from a range of materials and pretended to be astronauts while counting backwards from 10 to launch their rockets.

Teachers try to make sure that they set work that is challenging and engaging for all pupils. This match is not quite right at the moment. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are often too low and adults do not always use their knowledge of individual pupils or groups well enough to move learning forward at an appropriate pace or build on what they already know. Teachers do not always provide feedback to pupils during lessons quickly enough or adapt learning when work is too easy or too hard. Sometimes pupils who are able wait for their peers, or complete work that is too easy for them and therefore do not produce the work that they are capable of. This is also true for pupils who find work difficult. For example, in an English lesson, the text was too difficult for some pupils to read and to understand.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

There have been clear improvements in attendance. Academy leaders have worked closely with parents and pupils and, as a result, more pupils are arriving on time and ready to learn. Higher numbers of pupils come to school more often and fewer pupils take too much time off school. One successful strategy to increase punctuality has been the introduction of early morning challenges which pupils are keen not to miss!

Pupils are welcoming, polite and friendly. There are fewer incidents of poor behaviour than previously and no recorded incidents of bullying this year. Pupils have noticed the improvements in behaviour and say that they feel safe. Parents also believe that their children are safe, happy and well looked after.

Pupils are positive about the changes to their academy and one pupil described it as 'transformed'. They talked about the sacrifice that staff made by giving up their car park to put the pupils first. They identify that improvements to the playground and a wider range of activities than previously have helped behaviour to improve and the number of accidents and incidents to reduce. Pupils also feel that the introduction of the nine habits, including forgiveness and consideration, have helped them to think more about their behaviour and be considerate to others.

Pupils' behaviour for learning is more fragile. In lessons, pupils are very reliant on support and affirmation from adults which hinders their confidence to work on their own. This is compounded by a lack of opportunity to demonstrate stamina and perseverance, especially in their writing. Some pupils say that they would just like to have a go rather than having to wait to be told that a sentence is 'golden'. However,

some others, including more-able pupils, are not confident that they can write a 'golden sentence' without adult help even though they are clearly able to do so.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Oasis Learning Community has acted quickly to secure effective leadership for the academy, including the appointment of a new Principal. The statement of action contains clear targets and success criteria linked closely to areas for improvement. However, the targets relating to outcomes do not reflect precisely enough the academy's knowledge of the pupils' levels of attainment. The statement of action ensures that people responsible for supporting the academy are not the same as those who are evaluating the impact of leaders.

The Principal and senior leaders have brought about a shift in culture and attitudes since the last inspection and are challenging historical low ambition for pupils. Staff have been galvanised, are motivated to join the drive for improvement and have confidence in the leaders. This view is strongly supported by parents.

Leaders are realistic about the academy's strengths and weaknesses. The academy's development plan is focused on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection and links well to the sponsor's statement of action. Senior leaders hold weekly meetings with staff responsible for leading actions within the plan and hold them to account to make sure that actions are having a positive impact. Phase leaders say that this has helped them to secure improvements and that they feel challenged, valued and supported by senior leaders. However, although there are many early encouraging signs of improvement, many initiatives are too new to show impact over time.

The most recent formal review conducted by Oasis Community Learning in October shows how rigorously and thoroughly academy leaders are held to account for improvements to the overall provision. This review examined all aspects of academy life and accurately reflects where the academy needs to focus most attention to secure rapid improvement.

Leaders have instilled clarity of purpose and have communicated expectations to staff, leading to increased consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the academy. Appropriate training, challenge and support are in place to address areas where the quality of teaching is not strong enough. There is evidence that leaders' support has made a positive difference to the quality of teaching, especially in early years and Key Stage 1. Leaders have secured additional support for staff new to teaching, including opportunities to observe outstanding practice.

Clearer systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of teaching on learning. Pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills are rigorously tracked and analysed to identify trends and areas for improvement. However,

leaders have not focused sufficiently on areas for improvement when undertaking activities to help them to evaluate the quality of teaching, and as a result teaching, learning and assessment have not improved rapidly enough. For example, leaders have not sufficiently focused in on the level of challenge and pitch, or the progress of the most able.

Leaders have developed systems for encouraging pupils to attend well and to be punctual and ready to learn. Moreover, leaders have recently sought support from Medway local authority to help them to improve attendance. This work is beginning to pay dividends with improvements in all areas of attendance. Safeguarding systems are rigorous.

The timely review of governance has strengthened the selection of the academy council and made clearer the role and responsibilities of its members. The academy's executive board and the academy council have a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This is because there are now increased opportunities for first-hand observations and conversations with staff to support information given to them by leaders. Regular fortnightly reviews enable them to hold leaders to account. The external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved is currently underway.

### **External support**

Oasis Academy Learning has brokered strong support. There are regular visits to check standards and assist the new Principal in his work. Oasis Academy Shirley Park and Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey have supported the academy in a range of areas, such as supporting subject and phase leaders in their new roles. Medway school-to-school support, and in particular St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, has worked collaboratively with leaders, focusing on provision in early years, and is currently undertaking the pupil premium review. Leaders are positive about the impact of external support.