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29 February 2016

Ms Fiona O'Sullivan  
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Manchester  
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Dear Ms O'Sullivan

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy MediaCityUK**

Following my visit with Fiona Burke-Jackson, Ofsted Inspector, and Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, each for one day, to your academy on 9 to 10 February 2016, 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 that have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in June 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

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

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Chair of the Academy Council, the Chief Executive of Oasis Community Learning and the Director of Children's Services for Salford City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 9 to 10 February 2016**

### **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 four teachers and two other members of staff. Inspectors met formally with two groups of eight pupils and had informal conversations with others during the academy's day. Meetings were held with a representative of the sponsor and the chair of the academy council, which acts as the local governing body. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. An inspector observed an assembly for Year 9 pupils. Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' books and examined other books during visits to lessons. Inspectors visited a staff meeting. An inspector spoke to a group of primary school pupils who were visiting the school for a learning activity.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, two teachers with permanent contracts, two teachers with temporary posts and two non-teaching members of staff have left the academy. A long-serving member of staff has died. Three teachers with permanent contracts and five other members of staff have joined the academy. The academy did not reach its goal of having all teaching posts filled by permanent members of staff by the end of the autumn term. However, an additional teacher has been appointed and this goal is expected to be achieved at the start of the summer term.

A deputy principal has been seconded to another academy within the Oasis Community Learning (OCL) multi-academy trust until the end of the summer term and, in return, a deputy principal from that academy has been seconded to Oasis Academy MediaCityUK.

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

The Principal and other senior leaders are continuing to drive improvement in the academy with passion and determination. This is possible because they are fully committed to the success of pupils and know the academy very well.

Leaders continue to use their regular reviews of pupils' achievement to identify any pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning and to plan how to help them avoid this. Subject leaders meet with senior leaders every two weeks so that there are regular checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. These have not been sufficient to ensure that teaching is consistently good enough, particularly in Key Stage 3.

The recent changes in staffing, both through external appointments and changes of the roles of existing members of staff, have further strengthened leadership. The arrangement to 'swap' deputy principals with another OCL academy has been planned to allow both academies to benefit from the broader range of experience of both of the senior leaders involved.

Middle leadership has been strengthened through the introduction of additional leadership posts in the main subject areas. These give more time for leadership activity and to develop teachers' expertise. In addition, a new approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) has been put in place. SEND leadership is one of the overall responsibilities of the seconded deputy principal and an interim middle leader to co-ordinate SEND work has also been appointed. At the same time, the work of the learning support unit (LSU) has been reviewed. The LSU room has been relocated to be adjacent to the library, allowing for easier access to literacy resources and support from the academy's new librarian.

The academy has gained additional accreditation for its effective practice by gaining the Inspiring IAG Bronze Award in recognition of the quality of the careers education in the school.

The academy council continues to steer the work of academy. It does not shy away from challenging leaders about the academy's work. For example, the academy council's scrutiny of last year's examination results was probing and detailed. Its members support further improvement through their interest in, and celebration of, the successes already achieved.

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

Teaching, in general, continues to become more effective. Pupils value this; their expectation is now that they will experience teaching which will help them learn rather than the disjointed and disrupted experience they frequently had in the past. Teachers know pupils well and this gives pupils the confidence they need to learn. However, when leaders have to change a class teacher, some pupils still comment that their new teacher does not know them as well. Pupils recognise when teaching meets their needs; for example, two pupils from different years almost identically explained to an inspector how mathematics teaching has improved because 'the teacher explains things step by step'. The positive relationships between teachers and pupils are a strength of the academy and underpin the most effective teaching.

While the improved teaching has been central to the faster progress of pupils across the academy, some teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 3, does not meet pupils' needs because it does not challenge poor attitudes or instances of poor behaviour well enough. This means that some pupils do not achieve as much as possible.

More teachers with the required skills and relevant experience have been appointed. This has directly contributed to good-quality teaching, in turn leading to faster learning. It has also meant that leaders have been able to change how teachers are deployed to support improvement. This has sometimes been part of a wider strategy such as setting up an additional teaching group for Year 8. This plan was put in place to increase rates of progress and reinforce the highest standards of behaviour. The changes also allow leaders to respond to unforeseen pressures, such as the need to appoint an interim subject leader in science.

Leaders have ensured that the training programme for teachers has continued. This now involves more teachers leading training activities linked to their own effective practice and previous experience. Training is more closely targeted to each individual teacher's development areas. These are identified through senior leaders' close checks on the effectiveness of each teacher. Teachers have been grouped together in threes to observe each other's practice and discuss how improvement might be made.

The academy improvement plan includes marking as one of its targeted areas. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work. However, the approach teachers take varies and the school's policy on marking is not always implemented well. At the last monitoring inspection, inspectors noted that 'growth tasks' were not being used consistently to add to pupils' learning; this is still the case. Sometimes these 'growth tasks' challenge pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding but opportunities to do this are sometimes lost, on occasion because pupils choose to disregard teachers' written comments. In addition, some teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation are not sufficiently demanding; they accept scruffy presentation too readily.

Leaders have ensured that the rigorous systems for assessing pupils' progress are given high priority. The close checks on the accuracy of assessment within the school and between schools in OCL remain in place.

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

Pupils told inspectors that the improvement to their behaviour has continued. Inspectors saw pupils behaving well around the academy. A good example of this is in the calm way pupils line up and enter the building at the start of each day.

The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe and that incidents of bullying, racism and homophobia are very rare. The academy's records show that the frequency of incidents of bullying or poor behaviour has fallen further. Pupils' attendance remains above the national average. These successes are a result of the concerted efforts of senior leaders with careful work to emphasise the positive aspects of the academy's strong ethos. Staff celebrate success with pupils but also provide firm challenge if pupils do not meet expectations. These characteristics

were seen during a Year 9 assembly which had 'Compassion' as its theme. Compassion is one of the 'habits' of OCL which are identified around the academy and emphasised in its work. These underpin the academy's strong development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experience.

Pupils show respect for the school buildings; there is almost no litter inside the buildings and very little outside. Pupils, in general, also show respect for the academy's rules. However, some pupils chew gum while in school. This is not always challenged by members of staff. Pupils' punctuality during the day has been improved by the simple measure of playing music during the time allowed for movement between lessons.

Inspectors saw most pupils behaving well and showing enthusiasm for their learning. A small number of lessons in Key Stage 3 do not run smoothly because pupils do not behave well enough. Leaders have identified that the situation faced by pupils who joined the academy around the time it went into special measures may have contributed to poor attitudes from some, particularly in Year 8. Steps, such as providing an additional class in Year 8, have been taken to help such pupils engage better with their learning. The academy's transition activities for pupils joining at the start of Year 7 have been redesigned to ensure that they can make a really good start.

Leaders have continued to ensure that the academy's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Since the previous monitoring inspection, staff have received training to help them identify and respond to any pupils who may be at risk of experiencing extremist views or radicalisation.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Teachers and leaders have continued to work hard to ensure that pupils currently in Year 11 achieve much better than the previous Year 11 did in 2015. The academy's own information indicates that these pupils are on track to meet the demanding targets set within the academy. This information identifies that pupils are exceeding the rates of progress typically seen in other schools in English and that rates of progress in mathematics are close to those elsewhere. A small group of pupils has already completed an IGCSE in English, securing early results, building their confidence and allowing them to focus on studying English literature. The results from this external examination are most encouraging, with almost all who were entered making expected progress from their starting points.

Inspectors saw pupils in Key Stage 4 learning well in lessons and making rapid progress, for example in mathematics. Rates of progress in some classes in Key Stage 3 were seen to be slower, particularly when pupils let themselves down by behaving less well.

Unavoidable staff absence in science has meant that leaders have recently put new arrangements in place to ensure that pupils continue to make progress. While these have led some pupils in Year 11 to be concerned that they may not do as well as expected, evidence from the inspection suggests that the arrangements are effective.

The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language in the academy has continued to increase. School leaders have recognised this and made suitable arrangements to help these pupils do as well as others. The gains made by some of these pupils are marked; for example, some pupils who joined the academy at the start of this school year unable to speak English now communicate well in spoken English and are quickly improving their English reading and writing.

Scrutiny of work in pupils' books shows that, over time, some aspects of pupils' wider achievement, including their standards of presentation and written English, are not high enough. This demonstrates that not all pupils are trying their very best. In addition it leads to reduced achievement, for example when poor diagrams fail to illustrate ideas in science accurately or sloppy setting out in mathematics leads to errors.

### **External support**

The external support which the academy receives from OCL, the local authority and other schools remains effective.

OCL's more rigorous monitoring of pupils' achievement is ensuring that leaders are more confident that teachers' assessment of pupils' work is robust. The subject networks, established by OCL shortly before the previous monitoring inspection, are now starting to make a difference, for example in giving English teachers guidance on adjusting schemes of work and in supporting teachers in subjects which only have one specialist teacher.

The academy's work with two local teaching schools, Oasis Innovation Teaching School alliance and St Patrick's, Salford, continues to help newly qualified teachers learn and develop.

The secondment arrangements for the deputy principals together with the academy's work with local primary schools illustrate how the academy is now starting to be able to look outwards and offer support to other schools.