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Umber Sharif
Principal
Ormiston Six Villages Academy
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Dear Ms Sharif

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Ormiston Six Villages Academy

Following my visit to your school on 29 June 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

I met with you, the executive principal, senior and middle leaders, the chair of the interim executive board and the regional director of the Ormiston Academy Trust. Together with the seconded vice-principal, we visited lessons to observe teaching and learning, particularly focussing on mathematics. I also met with a group of pupils. The purpose of the inspection was to look at how effectively leaders were taking action to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report.

Context

Significant changes are taking place in leadership. The executive principal will leave at the end of term, having completed his contract, as will the seconded vice-principal who joined the school in April. The substantive vice-principal is also leaving at the end of term. Two assistant principals will join in September as secondees from the local teaching school alliance, replacing two who are leaving their posts at the end of term.

The head of mathematics left at the end of the spring term. A head of mathematics took up post in June seconded from a nearby outstanding school for the next year. Several mathematics teachers will have left by the end of term. However, a full complement of mathematics teachers will be in place for September.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You have taken swift and incisive action to lay the foundations for strong leadership and teaching. You have worked to establish open communication right from the start. You have made sure staff understand the challenges facing the school and what needs to improve, putting aside time for staff to meet and plan. You have moved quickly to secure a strong leadership team, bringing in fresh leadership while recognising and nurturing existing talent. You took the bold decision to abandon existing staff training and focus on getting the basics right. You have defined your expectations for teaching in the school's 'six six' list of 'non-negotiables'. Training and feedback from leaders' visits to lessons is helping teachers meet these expectations. Rightly, teachers who needed the most help to improve have received intensive support. You have responded well to a hard-hitting external pupil premium funding review. Your emphasis on teachers having disadvantaged pupils at the forefront of their minds when they plan, teach and assess is starting to take root. You have ensured a suitably high focus on improving teaching in mathematics, the seconded vice-principal devoting much time to raising expectations with the team and keeping a constant watch on quality. Encouragingly, during my visit we saw pupils engaged in purposeful learning in mathematics, from the moment they entered class. However, you recognise that there are many challenges ahead. Staff expectations are not yet routinely high for all pupils. Not all teachers are ensuring suitably challenging levels of work for pupils of varying abilities. Opportunities for problem solving and mathematical reasoning are relatively limited. The new mathematics team will need to hit the ground running in September. Nevertheless, the blueprint for success is there.

You rightly recognised the need to overhaul the school's assessment system. Leaders have developed a suitable approach. Subject leaders are defining the skills and knowledge pupils should grasp by key points in time, to progress successfully to the higher grades at GCSE. Leaders have determined a sensible way of capturing and evaluating assessment information so they can maintain an accurate view of achievement across the school. However, much remains to be done to ensure that, by September, teachers have the information necessary to teach lessons that enable pupils to grasp the skills and knowledge they will be assessed on.

You have not neglected the immediate needs of pupils. As a result of intensive support, many more Year 11 pupils have completed assessments to a good standard than was set to be the case in January. Pupils in other year groups who are behind in mathematics and English are also better supported. For example, daily extra mathematics sessions are helping pupils catch up. Additionally, you have paid attention to pupils' wider experience. You have set up a student leadership team and are listening to their views. Pupils talked of their relief that you agreed to abandon the

one-way system for moving around the school, which was not working. Pupils were also positive about the increased range of enrichment activities, such as musical theatre and catering clubs, that they are now involved in.

The interim executive board (IEB) provides robust support and challenge. It has defined the exact information required of leaders, and what will be reviewed when, so that expectations are clear and leaders can be suitably prepared. The chair of the IEB maintains frequent helpful dialogue with you to help ensure that plans are on track. He in turn receives useful support from the trust's governance adviser. The IEB is, rightly, ambitious to develop further. Plans are afoot to increase the size of the board a little to further broaden the board's skill set.

The trust provides helpful support and ensures clear lines of accountability. Expertise from within and beyond the trust has been brought in when needed. Secondments of leaders from effective schools have been utilised to ensure sufficient leadership capacity. The recently appointed regional director of the trust spends one to two days a week at the school providing hands-on support. Trust expertise has been used to improve information management systems and train staff in using them. External reviews, such as those on pupil premium and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have helped leaders gain an incisive view of what needs to be tackled. The regional director holds you to account through regular meetings and through his membership of the interim executive board. He is also held to account through fortnightly meetings with the national director of the trust, who in turn reports to the trust board.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgement was made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector