

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 June 2017

Mrs Helen Round
Principal
Oasis Academy Fir Vale
Owler Lane
Fir Vale
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S4 8GA

Dear Mrs Round

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Fir Vale

Following my visit with Melanie Williams, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17–18 May 2017, 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2016. 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer, the chair of the academy council, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Lunn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2016.

- Urgently secure effective leadership at all levels with the skills and expertise to:
 - rapidly improve the quality of teaching
 - improve pupils' behaviour, minimise the impact of poor behaviour on pupils' learning and ensure that all pupils feel happy and safe in school
 - improve attendance, ensuring that pupils attend regularly and on time in order to provide consistency and continuity in their learning.

- Improve the quality of teaching to secure good or better progress for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' work accurately, plan lessons that build upon and extend pupils' prior learning effectively, and provide the right level of challenge and support for pupils
 - making sure that teachers plan for and direct the work of teaching assistants effectively
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge so that the basic skills of communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics are taught well
 - improving the teaching of phonics to enable younger pupils to speak, read and write with greater confidence
 - developing a language-rich environment which allows pupils to immerse themselves in spoken and written language.

- Ensure that the youngest children get off to the best possible start by improving the cohesion and consistency of planning, teaching, assessment and use of resources in the early years.

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 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 17 to 18 May 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, deputy principal, middle leaders, teaching assistants, pastoral team, small groups of pupils and two parents. I also held meetings with the regional director of Oasis Academies and a member of the academy council.

Context

Two members of the teaching staff have left the school. Two temporary teachers are in post. A new assistant headteacher will take up post from September 2017 and the position of special educational needs leader has been advertised. The Nursery leader is training to become a qualified teacher.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders are continuing to follow their detailed improvement plans to ensure that the school moves forward. The 'getting to good' plan of action clearly identifies where the focus of work will be each term. Leaders can demonstrate progress towards key milestones.

Middle leaders continue to receive appropriate support to enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Both the principal and vice-principal work alongside leaders, offering coaching and professional development opportunities. Leaders appreciate the constant support on offer, which ensures everyone remains focused on the key priorities. Senior leaders hold key staff more accountable for the impact of their work, through weekly meetings, 'position statements' and through analysis of information. Middle leaders are enthusiastic to implement new initiatives but recognise the need to embed the new strategies that are in place.

Leaders have acted quickly to appoint two new leaders ready for September, to fill the gaps left by the previous post holders. Staffing stability remains a priority, and leaders are maintaining the right degree of challenge and support for teachers. Teachers speak highly of the unrelenting work carried out by the headteacher to ensure they receive appropriate support to carry out their work.

Leaders regularly observe teaching and learning across the school. Observations demonstrate that teachers receive honest and developmental feedback. The deputy headteacher continues to lead by example, working alongside colleagues and acting as a role model. Leaders can demonstrate the positive impact this is having on the quality of teaching through their own monitoring systems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Assessment procedures have been strengthened to ensure accuracy. Leaders have developed a more user-friendly system through which they can measure the progress pupils make. Leaders recognise that further work to evidence the impact of attendance and extended breaks from education is required to provide a more comprehensive picture.

Where staffing has been consistent, the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. This is because teachers have had opportunities to observe colleagues and access professional development, and are aware of what the school priorities are. Temporary staff receive comprehensive induction procedures to support their development, and regular monitoring. Leaders are fully aware where more work is needed to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.

Teaching assistants receive appropriate training and are effective in their role. They can now work with small groups to support learning without spending their time managing behaviour. As a result, pupils are well supported and are making progress.

Pupils now take reading books home and demonstrate positive attitudes to the new reading system. Pupils have daily opportunities to read and talk about stories. After a visit to an outstanding school, more work has been delivered around storybooks. Although this approach is new, initial results show that pupils are more enthusiastic about reading.

Phonics teaching is improving because teachers are more consistent in their approach. A higher proportion of pupils are expected to reach the required standard by the end of Year 1.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Incidents of poor behaviour are becoming less frequent. When they do occur, there are strong systems in place to ensure appropriate support and provision to manage the behaviour. The small numbers of pupils who are on part-time timetables receive a range of tailored support to ensure their needs are met. Leaders continue to work closely with parents and a range of outside agencies to provide detailed assessments of needs. The number of fixed-term exclusions is reducing, but remains higher than the national average. Permanent exclusions are reducing, used only after other avenues have been explored. Leaders are vigilant in liaising with alternative providers to ensure that pupils are attending and making progress.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning across the school. Teachers ensure that the behaviour policy is rigorously enforced and leaders support them in this. New pupils arriving from abroad now have positive role models to follow, and this is

helping to secure the culture of learning. Positive behaviour is promoted across the school and, as a result, behaviour logs show a significant reduction in the number of recorded incidents.

Attendance continues to improve because systems are firmly embedded. The pastoral team continue to work with families, making early morning visits and returning later in the morning if pupils are still not in school. Leaders follow the local authority guidelines for any pupils who are missing education. Detailed information is recorded and passed on in a timely manner.

Leaders recognise the importance of changing parental perceptions to education. More families now attend weekly events, such as cooking clubs and reading events. Bilingual staff provide support and advice for parents who are not used to the British education system. Parents value the efforts the school makes to support them and their children.

Outcomes for pupils

Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that pupils are now making better progress. However, there is still much ground to be covered because the majority of the pupils are so far behind national expectations. For example, the current Year 5 progress information shows that all pupils entered key stage 2 significantly below the national standard for seven-year-olds. Currently, all pupils are at least one year behind where they need to be, even though many are making rapid progress. Alongside this, the class has had an influx of new pupils with no previous schooling who do not speak English. This has had a negative impact on behaviour and relationships.

Standards in mathematics remain higher than standards in English. However, work to improve the spoken language skills of pupils is having a positive impact on vocabulary. Writing books show that pupils are constantly encouraged to find new words and further extend their writing.

Assessment information shows that outcomes are improving in every year group. However, most pupils are working below the national expectations.

Early years

Children enter the early years throughout the year, often when they reach statutory school age. Many children therefore do not receive a full year of Reception education, which has a significant impact on outcomes at the end of the year. Leaders are tracking the progress made by children who attended the Nursery, and setting appropriate targets.

Early years staff consistently tackle issues around sharing, turn taking and self-control. They are vigilant and intervene quickly, constantly reminding children how to behave and talking to them about making the right choices. Many educational

experiences are very new and leaders have adapted their provision to provide appropriate learning experiences.

Staff and children demonstrate strong relationships across the early years. A high level of care and warmth is evident. The youngest children engage in well-planned activities, which hold their interest. A significant difference during this visit was the positive impact of the work on speaking and listening. More children are now verbalising their needs and talking to friends during activities. This is because the focus has been on developing spoken language.

Small-group work focuses on developing listening skills and closely matches needs. Children are encouraged to use complex sentences, and given immediate praise when they do. Support is in place for those children who are at the early stages of language acquisition to help them improve. Well-trained teaching assistants deliver appropriate programmes to help children move forward.

Planning across the Reception classes is now more consistent. Teachers are given time to plan together and share ideas. However, there are still inconsistencies in resourcing and in how teachers interpret the planning. During the inspection, both Reception classes carried out the same mathematics activity, but one was more successful because children could access resources to help them understand new concepts.

Learning journals provide snapshots of what children can do. However, they are not effective in plotting the progress children make. Too many general comments, written repeatedly, make little or no reference to prior learning. Therefore, journals do not highlight gaps in learning or celebrate children's achievements. Some inconsistencies in assessment information demonstrate that leaders are not checking the information carefully to ensure outcomes are accurate.

Leaders recognise that further work is required to improve the learning environment. Some displays are out of date and do not reflect the standards that children are capable of. Some role play areas do not support high-quality learning.

Children's workbooks demonstrate the progress children are making, but higher expectations need embedding. The most able children are given work that does not challenge them to improve.

External support

The regional director continues to provide a high level of support to the school. He knows the school well and recognises the barriers that still need to be addressed for the school to move forward. Leaders take advantage of the range of support provided by Oasis Academies, including checking the accuracy of progress information, observing good practice and working alongside specialist leaders of education.