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Mrs Clare Wallace
Principal
Oakway Academy
Off Oakway
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Dear Mrs Wallace

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Oakway Academy

Following my visit to your school on 13 March 2018, 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 June 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the vice-principal and the assistant principals for teaching and learning, mathematics, writing and reading. I also met with the subject leaders for science and religious education (RE) and the coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, as well as the leader for pupils who speak English as an additional language and the head of pupil safety and welfare. I met the chief executive officer of the Hatton Academies Trust along with a number of directors and the head of primary education. Together with you and members of your leadership team, I visited a number of lessons. In addition to a scrutiny of workbooks belonging to pupils in Years 2 and 6, we also discussed the progress currently being made by pupils of different abilities, ages and backgrounds.

I reviewed a number of documents including the school's improvement action plan, the trust's statement of action produced following the last inspection and parents'

responses to a recent school questionnaire. I also reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures, including an examination of the school's single central record.

Context

The school is one of four academies within the Hatton Academies Trust. The trust has carried out a governance review and there is now a named link director for the school. Governance of the school continues to be undertaken by the directors of the trust. The review of the use of the pupil premium is partially completed.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The leaders have wasted no time in beginning to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The enthusiasm, ambition and developing expertise of senior, middle and subject leaders is evident. The leaders identify carefully planned training opportunities and the support of the trust's head of primary education as key contributors to the emerging improvements at the school.

The work to develop the school's curriculum, particularly with regard to pupils' understanding of world faiths, is well under way. Events such as world faith day are ensuring that there is an increased focus on pupils' knowledge. There is also a developing assessment system which is enabling teachers to judge pupils' progress and attainment in RE, while planning their next steps in learning.

Subject leaders relish their roles as subject experts for their colleagues. This is helping to improve teachers' and teaching assistants' questioning skills, thereby deepening pupils' understanding and learning. The consideration of pupils' views is also impacting on the quality of teaching and learning, for example in science, where pupils value the increased access to practical activities to enhance their learning.

The leaders have remodelled and enhanced the provision in the early years. Teachers and teaching assistants use clearly defined indoor work spaces to pre-teach children who then access increasingly well-designed learning activities. Although the outdoor provision has been improved and enlarged, it is not as rich in opportunities for children to develop their language skills as it could be.

The staff in the early years monitor activities to ensure that children are challenged, appropriate to their stage of development. Nevertheless, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years fell in 2017. Currently, children's rates of progress from their starting points appear to be rising. This reflects the increasing number of children who are making strong progress from developmental levels that are often well below those seen typically for their age when they enter the early years.

The leaders have reviewed the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1. This has resulted in increased levels of professional development for some teachers and teaching assistants, and a subsequent improvement and consistency in the use of pure sounds by adults and pupils. The school's internal assessment information suggests that these actions, along with a closer link between the teaching of pupils' phonic and reading skills, are increasing rates of pupils' progress in both subjects.

The teachers increasingly plan activities that encourage pupils to write, often for extended periods, over a range of subjects. This is supporting pupils' progress in writing. However, there are too many examples of pupils' key writing skills not being secured and the same issues recurring in their work, over time. Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation have begun to drop after an initial improvement at the start of the year.

In 2017, there was evidence of some improvements in pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. Nevertheless, the vast majority of outcomes remained below the national average. Leaders have rightly set ambitious targets for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of this academic year. Current internal assessment information and work in Year 2 and Year 6 pupils' books suggest that pupils' outcomes are likely to improve over those seen in previous years.

Leaders' efforts to improve pupils' attendance are beginning to have a positive impact. Attendance figures are approaching the national average and rates of persistent absence are dropping. Leaders monitor closely the impact of the renewed behaviour and relationships policy, and their analysis suggests that the number of incidents is declining. However, rates of fixed-term exclusions, although down from the previous year, are still too high, particularly for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

The trust's support for the school is having a positive impact. In particular, leaders identify the trust's head of primary education as a significant source of expertise, support and challenge. The trust's statement of action is embedded within the school's plans for improvement. Although leaders review these plans regularly, too often they list the actions taken rather than assessing fully the impact of these actions on improving the school.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement action plan is fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector