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Helen Adams and Amelia Nelson
Co-principals
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Dear Helen and Amelia

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Longmeadow

Following my visit to your school on 5 and 6 June 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 May 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement is fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

Evidence

I observed pupils' learning in lessons jointly with you, Helen. I also observed pupils' behaviour around the school. Additionally, I scrutinised pupils' work and documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan. Furthermore, I met with you both, the designated safeguarding lead, pupils, parents, the chair of the academy council and representatives of the Oasis Community Learning multi-academy trust.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have both taken over leadership of the school as co-principals. Helen, you joined the school in September 2017 as assistant principal and were then promoted not long afterwards. When you were appointed, two other co-principals were in post. One of these principals left the school in December 2017 and the other left in March 2018. You have been appointed as the substantive post holder from September 2018. Amelia, you joined the school on a short-term basis in January 2018 and will give up this role at the end of the academic year.

There have been significant changes to staffing in this small school since the previous inspection. Two teachers left the school in December 2017. Two new teachers began in January 2018, one a newly qualified teacher. There has been staffing turbulence in the Reception class throughout this academic year.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

You are both working with determination to improve pupils' experience of school. You are highly committed because you are driven by moral purpose. You want the best for pupils and are steadily drawing more and more on their untapped potential. You both take an honest, objective view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You know that the school is not yet where you want it to be and that there is further work to do. However, accurate self-evaluation means that you are well placed to tackle key issues in a timely, meaningful way. Seeing improvements take shape is encouraging you to approach your work with courage and optimism.

You have not been afraid to take difficult decisions in the best interests of the pupils. You have raised expectations of staff in order to improve the quality of teaching, monitoring of pupil progress and management of behaviour. You have been insistent that pupils should experience only the best. This has led to certain

staffing changes and the provision of tailored support where necessary. These circumstances have presented challenges, but you have made these decisions for the right reasons.

You are well supported by the Oasis Community Learning multi-academy trust, to which the school belongs. The trust is closely involved with the school in different ways. Most significantly, it shares governance with the academy council, taking specific responsibility for finance, monitoring standards and holding leaders to account. Consequently, the national director for Oasis primary schools and the deputy regional director visit the school frequently to evaluate the school's effectiveness and recommend next steps. They provide detailed, accurate and direct reports. These indicate the accumulative improvements being made but do not shy away from highlighting key weaknesses. These reports mirror your views that the school is not yet where it needs to be. As a result, the trust is bolstering your determination to keep striving for improvement.

The academy council is effective in providing day-to-day support for you and your staff. Council members visit frequently and participate in school activities, such as assemblies. They are increasingly forging stronger links with the local community.

The trust has been instrumental in shaping sustainable leadership that will take the school forward on the next stage of its journey. It has also enabled the school to tap into diverse support networks, ranging from human resources, information technology and finance to dedicated teaching support. For example, a lead teacher with early years expertise employed by the trust has been assisting in the Reception class this year. This has helped to provide much-needed stability. The range of support available has enabled the school to build capacity and cope with the difficulties that have arisen since the previous inspection.

Additional funding is being well used to improve the experience of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You have clearly identified the nature and extent of need for different pupils, and you have mapped out the provision that they require. Pupils are well known and their progress is tracked closely. The support that they receive has had a positive impact on the attendance of some pupils and has also helped to reduce exclusions. However, support is not yet making a sufficient positive difference to academic outcomes.

You do not have a firm grasp of the impact of some strategies funded by the pupil premium. The external review, recommended at the previous inspection, took place in the autumn term. It provided leaders at the time with useful guidance to improve this aspect of the school's work. However, although current leaders are able to describe the intended effect of strategies, they are unable to say explicitly what difference they have made.

You acknowledge that middle leadership is currently underdeveloped and that progress in this area has not been as rapid as hoped. This is because you felt that it

was a higher priority that teachers improved their teaching expertise. Nevertheless, there has been tentative subject leader development, particularly with regard to personal, social and health education and physical education. These subject leaders report that they feel able to contribute their ideas and exercise initiative. However, systematic monitoring and accountability procedures are not yet fully in place. Other subject leader responsibilities are being allocated, but you recognise that this is an area where greater progress will be expected by the time of the next monitoring visit.

You have taken steps to improve communication with parents and make the school a more open and accessible place. You are ambitious for the school to be at the heart of its community. However, parents have seen a succession of leaders since February 2017 and standards over time have not been high enough. Consequently, not all parents are satisfied with their children's school experience. You both recognise and respect this position. Helen, as substantive principal from September 2018, you are keen to get to know parents over time and realise that you must continue to work hard to earn their trust.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- You have provided teachers with effective training and resources to help them improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and to meet the demands of the new curriculum. For example, staff now have a better grasp of the principles and teaching of mathematics mastery.
- Since the previous inspection, a new assessment system has been implemented, which is providing teachers with more accurate information about pupils' progress. This is enabling leaders and teachers to track pupils' progress more effectively so that they can intervene in a timely way when pupils fall behind. It has also helped staff to develop a more secure understanding of age-related expectations.
- Staff take pride in the learning environment and understand its importance as an additional learning resource. All classrooms and corridors are colourfully vibrant, celebrating and modelling pupils' best work. Working walls provide helpful subject information to assist pupils in their learning.
- Teaching assistants have received training and are now more effective in their roles. They are able to lead discussions or ask questions that promote deeper thinking and move learning forward.
- Teachers are more consistently following the school's policy to provide feedback to pupils. This enables them to improve their work. Pupils are more routinely being asked to reflect on their work, identify mistakes and redraft with corrections.
- Behaviour across the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. In large part, this is because of your new behaviour policy. The policy emphasises the positive in order to bring out the best in every child.

Furthermore, it consists of a well-balanced range of rewards and sanctions. All of the pupils who spoke with me agreed that behaviour had improved and there were far fewer cases of bullying.

- The majority of pupils conduct themselves well around school during social times. When playing in groups outside pupils cooperate well with each other and are well supervised by staff. I observed pupils eating their lunch quietly and sensibly.
- The number of exclusions has fallen since last year. This is not only because of the new behaviour policy and the improving classroom experience of many pupils. It is also because of the introduction of the Rainbow Room. This is a quiet, supervised space used for pupils who need to withdraw from the classroom environment. Pupils are able to follow alternative curriculum activities, including gardening, cooking and art. This approach helps pupils to re-engage with school and improve their behaviour.

Weaknesses in the school's approach to securing improvements

- Weaknesses in leadership and management have been outlined in the first part of this letter.
- Behaviours for learning which encourage pupils to develop intellectual curiosity and a keen desire to participate in learning are not yet well established. These behaviours are more evident where the quality of teaching is better, allied to a strong relationship between teacher and pupils.
- Teachers across the school are not consistently matching tasks and resources to the different needs of pupils. This 'one size fits all' approach does not enable the less able pupils to fully access their learning. Correspondingly, it also does not enable the most able pupils to challenge themselves and think more deeply. Pupils who spoke with me said that the level of challenge was inconsistent, 'sometimes hard, sometimes easy'. However, I observed effective practice in this regard in the Year 2 and Year 3 classes.
- A significant proportion of pupils in several year groups are not yet making sufficient progress across a range of subjects. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged. Teaching, although improving, is not yet good enough to secure strong outcomes for these pupils. However, there are early signs of improved progress for some groups. For example, pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 are making expected progress in reading. Year 5 pupils are also making strong progress in mathematics. In several year groups, pupils who speak English as an additional language are progressing well in mathematics.
- Despite the school's work to reduce absence, attendance levels overall and for different groups of pupils are below the national average. In part, this is because the school's attendance figures are affected by the large number of pupils who have left this academic year. Staff have been proactive in providing incentives to pupils to be in school and working constructively with parents to help them understand the importance of attendance. Consequently, attendance has

improved since last year, but is not yet good enough.