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5 October 2018

Mr Michael Hardy
Headteacher
The Oakwood Academy
Bewcastle Road
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Dear Mr Hardy

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Oakwood Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 September 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 following the inspection that took place in December 2017. 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.

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 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 Redhill Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2017.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - carefully account for the allocation of additional funding and ensure that this funding is used to improve rapidly the attendance and achievement of eligible pupils
 - evaluate the impact of funding so they know which actions are making a difference and which are not
 - ensure that their evaluation of all aspects of the school's work is firmly rooted in evidence and used to inform action plans that have clear and measurable success criteria
 - embed strategies recently introduced to improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for pupils
 - build on the work that has recently been started to hold middle leaders to account more effectively.
- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and pupils of average ability, by improving the quality of teaching to ensure that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what all pupils are able to achieve
 - use the information about pupils' starting points to plan activities that interest and motivate pupils and match their needs more closely, so that lower-attaining pupils receive the support they need and the most able are consistently well challenged
 - use effective questioning to challenge pupils' misconceptions and move them on to the next stage of their learning.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - instances of low-level disruption and pupils' lack of focus in lessons are significantly reduced so that all pupils can make at least good progress
 - pupils' attendance improves and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent reduces, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

An external review of the school's 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 funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the chief executive officer of the Redhill Academy Trust, the executive headteacher, the headteacher and the senior leaders with responsibility for the oversight of the pupil premium strategy, pupil outcomes and pupils' attendance and behaviour. A group of Year 11 pupils were spoken with. The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the trust statement of action, the academy improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation and information regarding pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance. The inspector toured the school with the headteacher and observed pupils at the start of the school day, including pupils' arrival.

Context

The headteacher and an assistant headteacher, in post at the previous inspection, have left the school. A substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school and took up post in January 2018. An experienced executive headteacher, employed by the trust, has continued to oversee the school's improvement. Eleven members of the teaching staff have left the school. Fourteen teachers have joined the school, including two who job share their role with other schools within the trust. A restructure of support staff's roles has been undertaken. Nine members of the support staff have left the school. Three members of support staff have joined the school. A new chair of the governing body has been appointed. The governing body has been reconstituted to an academy advisory board.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

The pace of the school's improvement has accelerated since January 2018. The leadership of the current headteacher and deputy headteacher has had significant impact. The executive headteacher ably oversees leaders' performance and effectively supports their work. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Improvement planning is fit for purpose, has appropriate milestones for when actions should be completed and clearly identifies those accountable.

A review of the school's governance has been undertaken. The governing body is now an academy advisory board, chaired by the chair of the trust board of trustees. Membership of the academy advisory board is strong and includes those with the expertise and commitment required to hold leaders effectively to account.

The leadership of use of the pupil premium funding is efficient. A pupil premium review has taken place and many of its recommendations have been acted upon. Leaders are unequivocal in their ambition to ensure high expectations for the achievement of all pupils, but particularly those disadvantaged. The pupil premium strategy is far-reaching. There is evidence that the attendance and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils has improved. Fewer disadvantaged pupils are persistently

absent or excluded.

There remain some inconsistencies in the quality of middle leadership. The management of these leaders' performance is rigorous and there is evidence of improved performance. Senior leaders are keen to ensure opportunities for the sharing of good practice. Subject directors from within the trust provide additional leadership coaching and capacity, for example within geography.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Thorough monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is in place. A programme of teacher professional development, networking and mentoring has been implemented. Leaders' information indicates that the profile of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school has improved. Plans are in place to address the remaining weaknesses. Pupils said that the quality of teaching in many of their lessons was now 'so much better'. They cited new leaders' actions as the reason for this.

Most-able pupils spoken with said that sometimes in lessons they could be challenged further by their teachers. They told the inspector that, at times, they repeated learning that they had already grasped and that they wanted to 'be challenged by more difficult work'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The inspector observed pupils behaving in an exemplary manner at the start of the school day and as they moved around school. They are polite, friendly and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils said that they felt safe in their school and that there were many to whom they could turn if they required support.

There is now a forensic approach to the analysis of pupils' attendance. Careful actions are taken to ensure that pupils attend school, including work with parents, partner primary schools and local authority agencies. Pupils are rewarded for their good attendance. They arrive at school promptly and are rarely late. Leaders' information indicates that all pupils' attendance is better than that of all pupils nationally.

The school behaviour policy has been refined to improve clarity for pupils and staff. Overall, incidents of pupils' low-level disruption have reduced. However, there are inconsistencies in the application of this policy. Pupils said that in some of their lessons they were distracted by the 'annoying' behaviour of some of their peers. They felt that this issue was not always effectively tackled and that this meant that some pupils 'got away' with repeatedly misbehaving.

The proportion of pupils excluded from school has reduced. Leaders are continuing the focus to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils, including those who have SEN

and/or disabilities, attend school and that their welfare is safeguarded.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2018, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 4 improved in English and science, including for disadvantaged pupils. A greater proportion of pupils attained at level 5+ in English and mathematics. Improvements were also seen in the attainment of the eight subjects studied, particularly for the most able and the least able pupils. Results in other subjects, including business studies, history, product design and sport, also improved on the results in 2017. However, attainment in some EBacc subjects was not strong. Disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve less well than others do. Boys achieve less well than girls.