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12 February 2019

Mrs Shilpa Rathore  
Principal  
Oasis Academy Boulton  
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Dear Mrs Rathore

### **Short inspection of Oasis Academy Boulton**

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is to its credit, because there has been much instability in recent years. Many staff have left or joined the school in a relatively short time. This, inevitably, caused a lot of change and uncertainty. It affected consistency in the quality of teaching and had an adverse impact on pupils' progress.

Leaders managed the rapid turnover of teachers well. They worked hard to gain the commitment of staff to the school and its pupils. As a result, the school now has a climate of openness, ambition and, above all, the belief that everyone at the school matters.

The school is a very pleasant place to be. Pupils are happy to be there. They work hard in lessons and play sensibly together. They follow instructions without question, regardless of who has asked them to do something. Pupils are equally as polite and well behaved in the dining hall as they are in classrooms. Pupils' behaviour reflects the way staff treat them and each other. Relationships across the school are respectful and supportive. Staff are good role models for the 'Oasis 9 Habits': patient, forgiving, self-controlled, humble, honest, considerate, joyful, hopeful, compassionate. Pupils learn from this and display the habits well.

Leaders addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection by taking a detailed look at the quality of teaching in the school. They have provided

well-targeted training to address the weaknesses found.

Leaders check that training for teachers is making a positive difference to pupils. Where it is not, leaders provide support and guidance as necessary. They expect teachers to act upon advice and improve their practice. They hold teachers to account for this and take decisive action if needed. This is why the quality of teaching continues to improve.

Pupils' progress has recovered from the dip caused by the inconsistent quality of teaching in recent years. Pupils' books show that they learn well across a wide range of subjects in most classes. Their work is generally neat and well presented. Pupils are proud of their work and try hard to do their best.

Leaders are, correctly, directing their efforts to driving up standards in reading. They know that outcomes for reading have not been good enough in recent years. Leaders have put in place a more structured reading curriculum and trained teachers to teach the required skills more effectively. This is having some positive effect but not enough. Pupils' progress in reading has improved but many cannot read as well as they should for their ages. Some pupils fail to read well because they cannot recognise words easily. This is because the school's approach to teaching phonics and early reading skills is not effective. In addition, pupils struggle to understand much about what they are reading. This is because many pupils lack the broad understanding of words that is necessary to make sense of tricky texts. Leaders have devised plans to tackle this issue, but these are at an early stage of implementation. There is still much to do.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has a very strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders have made sure that arrangements for keeping pupils safe are appropriate and implemented robustly. Leaders are acutely aware of the risks that exist in the local community. They ensure that teachers know what to do, if worried that a pupil may be affected by any of these dangers. Leaders take all concerns very seriously and act swiftly to provide help when needed. For example, leaders carry out their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty with care.

Following the previous inspection, leaders overhauled the school's curriculum to place pupils' personal development and well-being at its heart. They have planned in great detail how and when pupils will learn ways to protect themselves from danger and about the risks they face beyond the school gates. Leaders check closely that teachers follow these plans, so that pupils will have the information they need to stay safe. For example, pupils learn explicitly about the dangers of drugs, sexual exploitation, county lines, gun crime, knife crime and radicalisation. Leaders know that society is changing all the time and that pupils will be confronted by a growing number of dangers. For that reason, leaders keep the curriculum under review.

Leaders see the school as being at the heart of its local community. The culture of safeguarding extends beyond the school gate. Leaders actively seek ways that the

school's work can positively benefit individual families and the whole community.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have substantially redesigned the school's curriculum to ensure that children are fully aware of threats to their well-being. It now fulfils this aim very well.
- The early years provision remains exceptional. Most children join the Nursery or Reception classes unable to understand or speak English. Many struggle to manage their physical, social or emotional needs. Staff nurture them with great care and the strong belief that they will achieve well. Teaching is highly effective. Teachers continually assess what children can do and make sure that activities help them to build knowledge quickly. As a result, children grow tremendously in confidence and make rapid progress across all areas of learning.
- Phonics is taught well in the early years, but the weaknesses in the programme mean that pupils do not have a secure understanding of letters and the sounds they make by the time they complete Year 2. This means that some pupils struggle to read accurately. This leads to further reading difficulties as they get older.
- The frequent changes of staff in key stage 1 in recent years have resulted in the phonics programme becoming fragmented. As new teachers join the school, they bring different ideas about how to teach the subject. Therefore, the teaching of phonics is inconsistent.
- Some pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not made up for the lost ground in phonics caused by the weaknesses in the programme. They still find it difficult to decode unfamiliar words. They cannot understand the text because they do not know what the words say.
- Pupils' problems decoding words are compounded by the fact that their reading books are often too difficult. Pupils have to work so hard at saying the words that they lose the meaning of the passage. As a result, they become frustrated and lose confidence.
- Pupils' limited knowledge about what words mean, their vocabulary, further hinders their progress in reading. While they may be able to say the words accurately, out loud or in their heads, many pupils cannot understand what they are reading. This is why they can struggle to answer questions about a text. They simply do not know what the writer is trying to say.
- The school's new curriculum is beginning to tackle pupils' limited vocabulary. Leaders have identified the knowledge that pupils need in a wide range of subjects, to build the vocabulary they need to be able to read effectively. Early signs are positive, particularly for younger pupils. For older pupils, large gaps in their understanding remain. Leaders know it will take time to provide all the missing knowledge. However, the new curriculum provides a strong framework for doing so.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an effective, systematic, phonics programme is in place so that pupils master the phonic code quickly in the early years and key stage 1
- the books that pupils read on their own are not too difficult and help them to practise the phonics they have learned
- those pupils in key stage 2 who have a legacy of weak phonic knowledge, catch up with their missing phonics knowledge quickly so that they can decode words efficiently
- pupils develop a wide vocabulary so that they can make sense of quality texts.

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 Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandy Hayes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with: the principal, the deputy and assistant principals, other school staff and two members of the academy council. I spoke with the regional director and chief executive officer of Oasis Community Learning. I spoke informally to pupils in lessons. I looked at the 39 responses to the Parent View survey. There were no responses to the online staff and pupil surveys for me to consider. I visited lessons with senior leaders and looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. I listened to some pupils read. I considered the school's self-evaluation and its plans for development. I took into account pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress. I read a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection.