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Mr Nick Morley
Head of School
TBAP Octavia AP Academy
Coalwharf Road
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Cambridgeshire
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Dear Mr Morley

Short inspection of TBAP Octavia AP Academy

Following my visit to the school on 8 May 2019 with Clare Fletcher, Ofsted Inspector, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since becoming the head of school following the school's conversion to an academy in May 2016, you have embedded a strong vision that every pupil who attends Octavia Alternative Provision (Octavia AP) will access learning opportunities that are suited to their individual needs and aspirations. Your focus to raise the quality of teaching, learning and achievement for pupils has secured some success. For example, in mathematics teachers share a clear purpose to develop pupils' wider subject knowledge and skills. This enables pupils to strengthen their resilience when answering examination questions and ensures that they are confident to achieve their best. However, there are other aspects of the quality of teaching, learning and achievement for pupils that still need further improvement. These include increasing the amount of direct teacher time so that pupils have access to a broader and more balanced curriculum. Leaders also lack a clear view of the effectiveness of post-16 placements, so they are not able to provide well-informed support and guidance to current pupils.

Since your arrival at the school, leaders have increased the pace of school improvement. They have tightened systems, such as monitoring and analysing pupils' attendance. Leaders invest in staff development using additional funding effectively. For example, all staff have received pertinent training around mental

health and how to support young people affected by traumatic experiences. Several support staff have successfully trained to become qualified teachers.

Pupils are well cared for as individuals. Almost all staff and leaders know pupils and their families well. They ensure that pupils are motivated and looked after throughout the day. Staff use effective strategies to support the significant social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils in the school.

Many pupils join the school with extremely challenging behaviours. Leaders and staff use skilful interventions to deal with these effectively. Pupils appreciate the tenacity and patience of staff and commented, 'They keep on at you until it gets through to you it was wrong.'

Pupils and parents are effusive in their praise of the educational experience and the opportunity the school provides for pupils to develop their social skills. Parents talked to inspectors about how it has changed their children's confidence, allowing them to manage themselves both in and out of school. Pupils explained to inspectors the trust they have in staff, and how 'open, honest conversations are possible'.

Governors are supportive of leaders and now understand the improvements that need to be made. They realise that the consistent implementation of new policies and procedures is challenging and describe Octavia AP as a 'work in progress'. Through your effective leadership, governors have a more accurate view of the school's work. This is enabling governors to check the school's actions and challenge leaders more readily.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff understand how to recognise any signs that a pupil is at risk and know what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders work to support the most vulnerable pupils and provide well thought out and carefully planned interventions. Safeguarding leaders are tenacious in chasing external agencies when they feel that pupils are not getting the support that they need. Records of this work are detailed and of a high quality.

You undertake appropriate checks on staff who are in your employment. These checks are timely and refreshed at a rate you have chosen that is above the minimum required. The quality assurance and review of staff recruitment procedures is systematic and accurate. As a result, all records are well maintained.

Pupils are confident that staff look after them well. They say that they feel safe and know how to seek help from staff when needed. One pupil said, 'You are treated as an individual and cared for.'

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection, inspectors considered whether the school's chosen curriculum enables pupils to make at least good progress from their starting points. This is because published information about the school does not give a full picture of pupils' achievement across subjects. Many pupils have not attended school for long periods of time since leaving their previous placements. Additionally, some pupils have been exposed to difficult circumstances, which has interrupted their education. When pupils join the school, leaders and staff assess pupils' learning needs so that the appropriate support is put in place quickly.
- Since your appointment, leaders have focused on developing a high quality and accessible curriculum that supports pupils to develop the skills needed to prepare them for successful adult lives. Staff know pupils well and have a good understanding of each pupil's needs and motivations. Pupils enjoy this individualised approach and are offered an increasing range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills across different subjects. These include GCSE and entry-level qualifications.
- Staff are providing pupils with an increasing range of opportunities across the wider curriculum, including access to vocational activities such as hair and beauty and construction, as part of the school's specialised provision. Staff are committed to broadening the curriculum further with additional sports classes such as swimming and enhanced outdoor learning by initiating the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. However, there is currently a shortfall in the face-to-face teaching time that each pupil receives. It is less than the statutory 25 hours a week. While some pupils access a range of learning opportunities and are making strong progress across a range of subjects, this is not consistently so for all pupils.
- The teaching of key skills to build pupils' resilience for examinations is a strength. Pupils are well supported to develop their core skills in a short time for English, mathematics and science. Pupils are enthusiastic to share their work with others. They are rightly proud of their achievements and most try hard to overcome the challenges that they face.
- Staff plan effectively for the personal and social needs of the pupils. This planning includes their transition from home into school, into classes and when pupils have tutor group time. The effort and care taken allows the pupils to transition throughout their school day smoothly. Pupils are well supported by skilled and highly trained staff who are committed to providing high-quality provision. Individual staff members told inspectors, 'Genuinely I think I'm upskilled', 'I enjoy my job' and 'I feel revitalised as a teacher.'
- Inspectors considered how well pupils are prepared for life after school. Leaders are committed to ensuring that young people are well prepared for their next stage of education when they leave the school at the age of 16. As a result, and since your appointment, all pupils now go on to appropriate post-16 destinations. The pupils who inspectors spoke with could all talk confidently about their college places and were excited about the summer transition into college and apprenticeships.

- Currently, leaders do not monitor pupils' success in their college courses. As such, leaders are not aware of the quality of these courses and how they support pupils to achieve well. This limited overview does not enable staff to offer current pupils' accurate careers advice, guidance and information.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors also reviewed the attendance of pupils. This is because published information is unclear about the impact of leaders' actions on ensuring that pupils attend school regularly.
- The school has appropriate systems to record and check the reasons for pupils' absence. In particular, there are some strong examples of leaders' effective work with individual pupils and their families to improve attendance, especially where pupils are experiencing challenging circumstances. Leaders have established a close working relationship with external agencies such as the local police and the education welfare officer. This provides leaders with additional information to enable them to support pupils appropriately and increase their attendance.
- Leaders have a strong overview of the attendance of pupils year on year and can clearly demonstrate that their actions are improving the attendance of most pupils in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- increase the hours of teaching time to meet the statutory minimum of 25 hours a week
- broaden the curriculum to further meet pupils' individual needs, interests and aspirations so that all pupils achieve as well as they can
- monitor pupils' achievements more closely when they move onto the next stage of their education so that staff can provide well-informed careers advice and guidance to current pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Fyfe Johnston
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders and a group of staff. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the governing body and a school effectiveness partner from the local authority to discuss their work with the school.

We observed pupils learning in different lessons throughout the school. This was carried out jointly with you or other senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons. We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. We spoke with pupils informally and met with a representative group. We reviewed a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour and administration and leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning. Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and development plans. We considered telephone conversations held with parents and carers, parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text messages. Inspectors also took account of the responses from staff who completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.