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Morgan Haines
Headteacher
City Heights E-ACT Academy
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Dear Mr Haines

Short inspection of City Heights E-ACT Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 2019 with Janet Hallett HMI, 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.

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 your appointment in September 2018, you have taken swift action to address a number of key areas. You have added capacity to the senior leadership team, and prioritised improving the quality of teaching, pupils' attitudes to their learning and their conduct around the site. You know there is much to be done and are clear about how you will secure the necessary improvements. While many initiatives are still in the early stages, there has already been an impact on the ethos of the school and the learning environment.

Pupils told the inspection team that behaviour around the school has improved since your arrival, and many now attend more regularly. Pupils were clear about your high expectations and appreciate your commitment to ensuring that the school provides a good quality education. The Academy Ambassadorial Group (AAG) works to strengthen links between the school, parents, carers and the wider community. You know that communication between these groups in the past has not been strong. The AAG is dedicated to strengthening these links and promoting the positive aspects of the school, locally.

The E-Act directors share your sense of urgency to make the necessary improvements so that pupils can make good progress. They, too, have an honest understanding of the task in hand. They provide appropriate advice and guidance,

subject expertise and support to appoint high-quality teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding pupils is a high priority. You, your team and staff are highly vigilant about protecting pupils, providing early help and sharing relevant information. Staff are well trained and understand their statutory responsibility to keep pupils safe. Systems and processes for reporting and recording concerns are robust. Checks on the suitability of staff who work at the school are in line with current guidelines.

You and your staff are aware of the potential risks to young people in the wider community. In particular, gang affiliation, knife crime, child sexual exploitation and criminal activity, are very real risks to some of your pupils. Consequently, staff are well trained and alert to any potential issues. Equally, pupils say that they are given regular advice and guidance on how to stay safe. This includes learning about online safety and the dangers of being groomed or radicalised. You are clear about pressure points when risks are more prevalent, for instance, when pupils leave school at the end of the day. Consequently, you and your staff patrol the area to minimise risks and ensure that pupils behave well on their way home.

Inspection findings

- In 2018, the first cohort of Year 11 pupils gaining GCSE qualifications did not make good progress across a range of subjects. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils, boys and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Your leadership team's analysis of these outcomes showed that poor attendance, some ineffective teaching and staff changes all played a part in these disappointing results.
- Since September, you and your leaders have focused on ensuring that current Years 10 and 11 pupils receive the necessary support to catch up and improve their learning.
- Improving the quality of teaching across all subjects is a priority. You have introduced the 'City Heights Six' to bring consistency to the minimum expectations required in every lesson. Staff development training and support from subject experts in the E-Act trust has begun to have some impact. Pupils' work shows that there is a more consistent approach to giving pupils information on how they can improve their work.
- Issues around recruiting and retaining high quality teachers are prevalent. Some pupils reported that they have had several changes in teachers this academic year. You hope that staffing for September 2019 will be more stable, as you cultivate and develop your own teachers.
- Many pupils are disadvantaged or have special educational needs. Your leaders are clear about how the additional funding has been spent. However, their analysis of the impact on pupils' progress lacks detail and precision. The approach to improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils does not identify the barriers to these pupils making progress. As a result, funding is not targeted

carefully enough. This is an area that requires attention.

- Many pupils arrive with weak literacy, numeracy and/or communication skills. You have devoted more curriculum time to these areas in key stage 3, and this continues to be a priority for the school.
- When you arrived, pupils' behaviour was not conducive to learning and the site was not routinely safe. Complaints from parents, high exclusions and poor attendance were prevalent. You and your leadership team have implemented a number of initiatives to address this.
- Together, you raised staff's expectations about what was acceptable behaviour around the school site and introduced a number of measures to encourage calm and orderly conduct. Pupils start each day with an organised line-up. Staff are highly visible during breaktimes and transition points. Pupils are clear about the rewards and sanctions system. Some pupils say that behaviour around the school had improved recently, that the school is calmer, and that lessons are more productive.
- In lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. Where there is stronger teaching, pupils are keen to engage in the activities. They take pride in their work and want to learn. In lessons where there have been a number of teacher changes, or over-reliance on temporary teachers, pupils are less motivated to work. Some staff say that they need more support to address pupils' poor behaviour.
- Fixed-term exclusions continue to be above average. However, you are balancing the need to instil high expectations for pupils' conduct with the requirement to ensure a safe learning environment. Consequently, you have reviewed your approach to exclusions. There are now more in-school exclusions, so that pupils are kept safe. The internal exclusion room (IEU) is used effectively to ensure that pupils continue to study.
- Attendance has been poor over time, for some pupils. You and your leadership team have analysed the reasons for pupils' poor attendance and put in place initiatives to improve things. You are working to promote the importance of good attendance with parents, particularly those who take their children on holiday during term-time. While attendance is below the national average, it has begun to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recently introduced systems to improve pupils' attendance and behaviour are embedded so that pupils attend regularly, and their conduct in lessons and around the school is routinely good
- the focus on improving the quality of teaching continues so that it is of a high standard across all subjects and key stages
- they analyse specific barriers to learning for groups of pupils, particularly those with SEND or those who are disadvantaged, so that extra funding is deployed

well, and its impact is routinely checked

- pupils are supported to improve their literacy, communication and numeracy skills so that they can access the curriculum appropriately.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- We were at the school for one day.
- We met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- We held meetings with E-Act directors and the chair of the AAG. We met with senior leaders to consider the impact of their actions.
- We scrutinised a range of documentation, including referrals to external agencies and the register of safeguarding checks made on staff.
- We visited lessons with you and other senior leaders to gather evidence on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- One of us met with a group of new teachers. We spoke to staff and pupils during informal times and in lessons. We met formally with a group of pupils from Year 8, and a group from Year 10. We looked closely at a range of work produced by these pupils.
- We took account of the 15 written responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, historical parental complaints, the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 11 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.