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Miss Dominique Gobbi  
Principal  
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Greater Manchester  
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Dear Miss Gobbi

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Oldham**

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 2019, 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 November 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, a group of staff, the regional director of the trust and the chair of the academy council, who is also a trustee. I spoke formally with two groups of pupils and carried out learning walks with senior leaders in languages, English and science. I also scrutinised a small sample of pupils' work. I reviewed several documents, including the school's self-evaluation document and minutes of the trust improvement group. The trust statement of action and the school improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

There has been considerable turbulence in the leadership of the school for a number of years. This has led to a number of changes in policies over time and has left teachers confused as to what is expected of them. As a result, there has been a general decline in the standard of education within the school. As soon as you took up your post in September 2018, you started on a journey of improvement. You have been supported in this by the regional director of the trust and the academy council of the school.

You have already restructured leadership across the school. Four senior leaders at the time of the last inspection have left the school. Two new appointments have been made. You have supplemented the reduced senior leadership team by working more strategically with middle leaders. This extended leadership team is working together to bring about improvement.

The Oasis community learning trust are providing ongoing support from their improvement section of the trust. The impact of the support is stringently monitored in the half-termly meetings of the trust improvement group. At these meetings you are held to account for the progress to date and the need for further support decided upon.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The school is benefiting from the support of the trust. The trust is providing you and your senior leadership team with the right amount of support and challenge. The changes to the structure of leadership and management of the school have placed you in a secure position to bring about improvement. However, these changes are very recent and have not had enough time to demonstrate impact across all areas for improvement from the last inspection.

The culture of the school is changing. In the past there has been a focus on intervention in Year 11 to try and fill the gaps in pupils' learning to prepare them for their GCSE examinations. You are putting high-quality teaching and learning across key stage 3 and 4 at the centre of all the actions in the school improvement plan. With the support of the trust, your leaders are developing the curriculum to provide a knowledge-based, challenging programme of study that builds on prior learning. This is in its infancy. However, already the introduction of quick memory tasks at the start of each lesson is helping pupils to remember things that they have already learned and make connections with new learning.

Staff say that since your appointment there has been a real sense of positive change. They feel that you are taking considered action to meet the needs of pupils more effectively. Staff said that they were consulted about the changes that were taking place. As a result, they feel valued and think that you consider their well-being as you bring about change.

You have produced an improvement plan to address the areas for improvement from the inspection in November. All identified actions are appropriate. The plan details the expectations for improvement together with lines of responsibility. This ensures that all leaders and staff are held to account for the learning and welfare of the pupils in their care.

You are working closely with the trust to ensure that the quality of leadership improves across the school. Many of your leaders are enrolled in the national qualifications for leadership. With the support of the trust you have provided

opportunities for leaders to visit other schools to see outstanding practice in action. As a result, your leaders at all levels are more closely focused on where further improvements are needed.

You have commissioned a pupil premium review that took place in January and you are already starting to implement some of the recommendations. All leaders now report on the performance of pupil premium pupils in their area. Those leaders that are participating in the national qualification for leadership must have pupil premium pupils as a focus in their school improvement work. A pupil premium statement based on the recommendations of the review will be implemented in the new school year. However, it is too early to see the impact of the changes that you are making in the provision for disadvantaged pupils.

Curriculum leaders now have more responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning within their subject areas. Local teaching schools as well as the trust's own national lead practitioners are helping middle leaders to develop the curriculum and improve teaching. Faculty meetings are used by curriculum leaders to share good practice with their subject areas. Teachers say that they value this training. They say that they discuss how to implement the training to bring about improvement to best effect.

Pupils that met me with their books spoke positively about their learning. They said that they liked the way learning started with a reminder of things that they had already learned. They said that it made new learning easier because they could remember what they already knew. However, they still felt that some teaching was not as good. They said that for some teachers, pupils did not behave well. Learning was difficult in these lessons. Although pupils' work was typically well presented and organised, there were occasions when work was missing or incomplete. In these cases, teachers often had not followed this up with the pupils.

You are keen to raise the profile of pupils' literacy across the school. As part of the development of the school building, you have set aside space for a library. The refurbishment of this space has already begun and will be ready for next year. The addition of a library will provide greater opportunities for pupils to read.

The leader with responsibility for literacy is developing a cross-curricular literacy policy. Currently, this mainly focuses on the correct use of subject-specific vocabulary and the use of basic grammar. However, the implementation of this policy is inconsistent. Some subjects, such as English and languages, use it to good effect. However, some subjects show little or no use of the policy.

You are changing the pastoral structure from a house structure to a year group structure. This will increase the number of staff providing support to pupils. As well as improving the focus on pupils' behaviour, this will allow pastoral leaders to gain an overview of pupils' progress through their learning. This change will take place in the new year.

The leaders for behaviour have started to develop a behaviour policy and a rewards policy that are more in line with the trust values. These will both be fully implemented by September. However, teachers say that pupils' behaviour is already improving through the use of the new achievement assemblies. These assemblies celebrate pupils' successes and relate this back to the character-building curriculum based on several key strengths.

You and your leadership team have also considered how the spaces within the building can be used to meet pupils' needs more effectively. You are using office space to extend the dining area so that pupils are more comfortable over lunch. There will be enough space for all pupils to have lunch in one sitting. Easy access between the dining area and outdoor spaces will allow pupils to move more easily around social areas during lunch. The aim of the improved facilities is to reduce the congestion over lunch and so avoid some of the weaker behaviour seen previously.

You will use the time and resources gained from the single sitting for lunch for the delivery of the personal development and welfare curriculum. The new curriculum aims to bring a higher profile to the trust character-building curriculum and the development of leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative and communication skills.

You have introduced a parent forum to help parents to support their children in school. The parent forum meets monthly to share information and listen to parents' views. For example, in the first meeting leaders explained the judgements in the Ofsted report and answered some of the parents' concerns about class sizes and pupils' behaviour. There have been two meetings to date. Currently, only a small group of parents attend the monthly meeting, but you have not allowed this to deter you. A monthly newsletter is sent out to parents and this also includes details of the previous meetings. The third meeting of the forum is due to take place in July.

There is no doubt that leaders, together with the trust, have already taken a range of actions to bring about improvement. The plans that leaders have put in place are appropriate. The improvements to leadership have placed the school in a strong position to bring about improvement. Some impact is beginning to be seen, but at the time of this monitoring inspection, it is too soon for these improvements to be embedded.

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 or equivalent of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oldham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Erica Sharman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**