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Sashi Siva
Interim Principal
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Dear Ms Siva

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Edward Worlledge Ormiston Academy

Following my visit with David Milligan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and Hannah Stoten, HMI, to your school on 5 and 6 May 2021, 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 January 2020. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan and action plans are fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 May 2021

Context

You joined the school as interim principal in September 2020. The chair of the local governing body also took up her post at this time. Two new parent governors have recently been appointed. The previous special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) stepped down from her role at Easter. At the time of the inspection, the new SENCo had been in post for three weeks. There are new leaders who have oversight of phonics, key stage 1 and well-being.

During the national lockdowns, teachers delivered 'live' lessons online and provided home-learning packs. During this inspection, pupils in a Year 2 'bubble' were self-isolating.

The focus of the monitoring inspection was on the actions taken to improve the school's curriculum, the education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), governance and the support from the trust. Inspectors also checked that safeguarding procedures remain effective.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Improvements to the curriculum have been made at pace. All subject curriculum plans have been rewritten and implemented. Following on from their training, subject leaders have a better understanding of how pupils learn. They have carefully considered the content and knowledge they want pupils to learn and in which order. A sharper focus on identifying what pupils need to know and remember is helping pupils' confidence with their learning. For example, the new mathematics curriculum is helping pupils to talk knowledgeably about number facts. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary well. There is now consistency in the approach to teaching mathematics.

The teaching of phonics has improved. Teachers are checking pupils' knowledge of sounds so that they can quickly give support when they notice that a pupil is struggling. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn and rehearse their phonics. This helps with pupils' reading. Pupils are reading books that match the sounds they know. Pupils also have access to a digital library. Teachers' checks show that pupils are reading more often and have access to a wider variety of texts. One parent commented that the digital library had introduced her son to classic texts he might not have picked up ordinarily.

The wider curriculum is well planned. The curriculum for French is particularly ambitious. Year 3 pupils explained to inspectors how they apply their learning from other subjects, such as history, in their French lessons. Pupils are also enjoying the science curriculum, describing in detail practical experiments, such as one in which

they used dye to test water absorption and then explaining what happens. The physical education curriculum focuses on teaching pupils the theory behind sport, as well as how to play well. Pupils in Year 5 spoke knowledgeably about the tactics for defence in basketball.

Weaknesses remain in the education of pupils with SEND. Although curriculum leaders have adapted curriculum plans and staff have undertaken training, this work is still in its infancy throughout the school. In Reception, teachers are aware of children's individual needs and plan accordingly. However, this approach is not consistent across all year groups. Actions on pupils' support plans are generic. They do not focus specifically on pupils' needs and the knowledge and skills they need to learn. Support is not adapted quickly enough for when pupils get stuck. The views of parents and carers on the support for their children are mixed. Some parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about improvements, while others who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, were less so. Leaders have correctly identified that there is more work to do in this area.

The quality of education in the SEND resource base (SRB) is effective. The curriculum is the same as that taught throughout the main school. Adaptations made to the curriculum address the specific needs of the pupils well. Staff understand the needs of pupils and help pupils to manage their emotions. The focus on developing life skills and independence is helping pupils to prepare for the next stage of their education.

Careful thought has been given to how and why alternative providers are used. Leaders make regular checks on how well pupils are doing. Alternative provision providers work well with leaders to ensure that pupils' needs are met.

The action plan identifies the urgent priorities for ongoing improvement. It gives clear measures of how and when these priorities will be achieved.

Governors show a secure understanding of their role and the context of the school. The introduction, by the trust, of progress board meetings, and closer scrutiny of reports and reviews at local governing body meetings are effectively holding school leaders to account. Governors have checked at first hand the improvements that have been made. They visit the school and speak with pupils and staff. Governors are involved with strategic decisions about the curriculum. For example, one governor attended the trust's primary network to educate herself on the different approaches that primary schools are taking. This helped to inform her questions to leaders in relation to the decisions they were making.

The trust commissioned a pupil premium review. The review has altered leaders' approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are now focused on pupils' knowledge and understanding of English and mathematics. According to leaders' checks, the tutoring programmes for English and mathematics are making a difference.

Staff morale is high. They are committed to the school's programme of improvement. One member of staff described the past year as a 'rollercoaster' of emotion, but staff are proud to be improving the school as a team. Staff feel listened to and are of the view that their voice is heard.

Additional support

Trust leaders responded quickly to the areas to improve outlined in the previous inspection. They appointed an interim principal and undertook a series of reviews to inform improvement and action plans. Leaders are benefiting from wide-ranging support. Senior leaders are supported by the primary director and director of education for the trust. Curriculum leaders are benefiting from subject networks and leadership training. The SEND lead practitioner for the trust is supporting the work of the SENCo.

Trust leaders have also commissioned effective external support. For example, the Wensum English hub is supporting the development and delivery of the phonics programme.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim principal, the chief executive officer, the director of education and the primary director of the trust, and a member of the governing body. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also met with senior and other leaders, members of the teaching and support staff, and two groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke with 10 parents, including parents of pupils with SEND. Inspectors considered 61 responses to Parent View and 30 free-text comments. Inspectors also took into account 40 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.