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Richard Burgas
Principal
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Dear Mr Burgas

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oak Academy

Following my visit to your school on 29 June 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has been reorganised and a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has joined the school. Two new assistant vice principals have been appointed to oversee standards in key stage 3 and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The sixth-form provision has closed.

The school's governance is currently changing from an academy priority support committee to a local governing board.

Main findings

You have made the local community proud of the school. Comments from the Ofsted Parent View in March 2021, and for this inspection, confirm the support and appreciation from parents. As one parent said, 'I can't praise Oak enough. The support they offer the whole family, not just the pupils, is amazing.' This is typical of many.

At the beginning of the pandemic, you appointed additional staff to communicate between school and home, especially for those pupils who are most vulnerable. This continues today, and many more families communicate frequently with school staff. Staff are tenacious in their work with the few pupils who are still persistently absent. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving. Year 11 pupils are no longer attending school but you have made sure that future placements for the majority are appropriate and in place.

Since the last full inspection, you have reorganised the curriculum. There is a greater choice of subjects for pupils in key stage 4. Subject leaders ensure that pupils receive a full curriculum entitlement. They make sure that the learning within topics is in a suitable order. As a result, pupils know and remember more. However, the building of knowledge between topics is not as effective in some subjects. Leaders have yet to define clearly what the curriculum outcomes are by the end of Year 11, beyond the requirements of examination specifications.

You have appointed a teacher to oversee reading in key stage 3. Pupils in Year 7 who enter the school without the ability to decode receive specialist teaching in phonics. This is very successful. Other key stage 3 pupils read within lessons and teachers guide them well to choose books that match their fluency in reading. You have established a new library in a spacious and comfortable setting which encourages these pupils to read at social times. As yet, pupils in key stage 4 do not receive the same support. Consequently, their vocabulary and knowledge are not enriched in the same way.

The SENCo has made sure that staff know the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. She has mapped their needs carefully. There are, now, more pupils on education, health and care plans so that staff can support their complex needs in a better way. The SENCo has arranged staff training quickly and efficiently. As a result, teachers and other staff are more confident in ways to adapt teaching so that these pupils can learn effectively alongside their peers.

You have improved behaviour and reduced exclusions with effective new systems. The school has its own alternative provision for those pupils who need additional support in managing their behaviour. These pupils receive a bespoke curriculum. Several pupils have returned to the main school successfully and settled back to learning productively.

Pupils usually engage in a range of extra-curricular activities. These help pupils build resilience, such as the Ten Tors expedition and the Duke of Edinburgh award. Others provide sporting and creative challenges. Many of these have not taken place this year because of the pandemic.

Additional support

Since the school joined the multi-academy trust in 2017, trust leaders have been very clear about the changes needed. They have provided capacity at leadership level. The trust's director of secondary education supports senior leaders with the revamping of the curriculum and improving teaching and learning. The trust leader for SEND has worked closely with the SENCo to make sure plans develop swiftly.

The trust's knowledge of suitable systems is helping school staff manage poor behaviour, especially of those pupils whose behaviour is more extreme. The new behaviour management system focuses on positive rewards and acknowledgement of success. Pupils respond well to it.

The trust has provided the funding to employ extra staff who assist with the communication to families that has been so essential during the pandemic. These staff are focusing, correctly, on pupils' attendance and well-being.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the principal, other senior leaders, the secondary director of education, pupils and staff, and an online meeting with the chief executive officer, the chair of trustees and another trustee, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I looked at safeguarding, the work of pupils, visited lessons and listened to pupils read. I read responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 72 free-text responses, and staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Ambitions multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector