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Tina Lee
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Dear Miss Lee

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey

Following my visit to your school on 8 July 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 three 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.

The school should take further action to:

- improve how monitoring and self-evaluation systems are used to focus academy improvement plans upon the key strategic priorities for the school
- continue to develop the curriculum so that all subjects are similarly ambitious and challenging for all pupils, especially the most able pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- refine the systems that they already have in place so that pupils' attendance improves and persistent absence is reduced.

Context

Since the previous inspection in July 2019, there have been some changes to leadership. An executive principal joined the academy last September but left in April. A new executive principal has just joined the school from another school in the trust. Three deputy principals have left, and a new assistant principal has joined the school.

The academy is expanding in size and has recently undertaken a restructuring of staff. This is so that the school can offer key stage 3 over three years from September and increase the allocation of time for modern foreign languages. In addition, a new reading support unit is being developed. New teaching appointments have been made for next term to facilitate these plans.

At the time of this inspection, Year 11 and Year 13 pupils were not attending their usual lessons because their courses had finished.

Main findings

After the previous inspection in July 2019, you started work to improve the curriculum, behaviour and attendance. However, the significant impact of COVID-19 on the school and local community disrupted your plans. As a team you are very clear about what still needs to be done and the urgency now needed to address these aspects of school improvement. Trustees know what needs to be done to develop sharper and clearer improvement plans and leadership support is being put in place to achieve this.

Working with the trustees, you have raised expectations of what pupils can and will achieve. With the support of officers from the trust, you are in the process of introducing a broader and more ambitious curriculum. Subject leads in English and geography are paving the way with improved planning and assessment. This is helping teachers identify gaps in knowledge caused by the pandemic. Staff focus on developing pupils' knowledge and vocabulary in these subjects to challenge their thinking and improve their oracy and written skills.

This approach is not yet fully embedded across the whole curriculum. However, you know which subjects need greater attention to achieve this and a wealth of subject-specific training for teachers is underway. You are aware that further curriculum refinements are still needed to raise the level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able.

You recognise the impact that the pandemic has had on pupils at transition points. To support Year 11 pupils, staff have put together a programme of work and have liaised with local colleges where necessary to support their transition to sixth form. Year 13 students have been receiving advice and guidance to support them with their move to university or employment.

Senior leaders working with the new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have begun to reinvigorate the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Better plans are in place to support pupils with SEND during the transition from Year 6 into Year 7. In addition, improved assessments of pupils' needs across the school allow the SEND team to share better information with teachers. Working closely with teachers of physical education and mathematics this year, the SENCo has helped staff to adapt their teaching to better support pupils with SEND. You are aware that this work is in its early stages, and that more needs to be done to ensure consistency across all subjects, but early signs are promising.

You have rightly given top priority to promoting pupils' reading skills and literacy across all subjects. The trust has appointed additional staff to lead a new reading provision on the Sheerness site from September. This will offer more bespoke additional support for pupils at an early stage of reading.

Your higher expectations can also be seen in the school's new systems to improve pupils' emotional resilience and behaviour. Staff and pupils recognise that these systems have brought about benefits as lessons are calmer and more focused as a result. However, pupils, parents and staff agree that there is more to do to ensure consistently positive attitudes and behaviour across the school.

Additional support

The trust has well-established systems to monitor the effectiveness of leaders' actions and holds leaders to account regularly. Trustees have coordinated and overseen training and support which has boosted leadership capacity within the school. Staff value the comprehensive and ongoing package of subject-specific coaching and support for improvements provided by the trust. Officers from the trust are currently providing training to support the curriculum and to improve SEND provision, reading skills, attendance and behaviour across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and two trustees to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I considered various documents, including the school's improvement plans and examples of curriculum-planning documents.

I held discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 58 free-text responses. I also took account of the views expressed in 70 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector