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Alastair Burnett
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Dear Mr Burnett

Special measures monitoring inspection of Olive Ap - Academy Suffolk

Following my visit to your school on 17 February 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing 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:

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 17 February 2022

Context

Olive AP Academy Suffolk has 60 pupils on roll. It continues to cater for pupils aged from seven to 16 years who have been referred by the local authority after being excluded from their mainstream school or take up additional places commissioned by the local authority. Many pupils have had long periods of missed education. Following the previous inspection, the local authority has agreed with the Olive Academies Trust (the trust) to temporarily halt placing pupils in the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those in receipt of an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) is above average.

Since the inspection in October 2021, four teachers have left the school and three replacements have been recruited. The school currently does not have a specialist science teacher. An executive headteacher, an interim deputy headteacher, an additional special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and an additional safeguarding leader have been appointed. The trust has established an interim progress board (IPB) to support and monitor leaders' work to improve the school.

There have been significant periods of staff absence due to COVID-19 during spring 2021. At the time of this monitoring inspection, there was no significant staff absence due to COVID-19.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Following the previous inspection, the trust and school leaders have taken decisive action to begin to address the significant weaknesses in different areas of the school's work. There is a shared commitment between trust leaders, school leaders and staff to make the necessary improvements.

The trust's statement for action sets out clearly the priorities for improvement and how these will be achieved. This has formed the basis of the school leaders' improvement plan. Leaders have put in place carefully considered actions and identified how they will know that these are making a difference. They know that some changes will take time to achieve and embed. They have put in place checks to know if they are on track to meet the deadlines that they have set to achieve their aims. The trust has tightened its oversight of leaders' work. The executive headteacher and IPB are providing effective support and challenge to leaders as they implement the improvement plan.

Leaders set about addressing weaknesses in safeguarding procedures immediately after the previous inspection. The trust organised an external review of safeguarding and it, alongside leaders, has ensured that the recommendations from the review have been quickly acted upon. Leaders have established a stronger culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding. They are now confident in how and when to report and record any concerns. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) now has

the support of other members of staff who have had DSL training and a member of staff from the trust. Leaders check that actions are accurately recorded, appropriate and have taken place in a timely manner. A review of safeguarding records showed that leaders have acted promptly to respond to recent concerns. They have involved external agencies when necessary to ensure that pupils get the help that they need.

Leaders have started to address the weaknesses in curriculum planning identified at the previous inspection. They have prioritised writing and implementing new curriculum plans in English and mathematics. These new plans, written by new subject leaders and a senior leader, identify more clearly the important subject knowledge that pupils should learn. This knowledge is organised in a logical order to help pupils build on previous learning. The new plans provide opportunities for pupils to revisit knowledge that they need to be able to recall and use easily, such as calculation methods in mathematics. There are early signs, from the scrutiny of pupils' work and visits to lessons, that pupils are benefitting from more effective teaching in these subjects.

Leaders have ensured that the vocational subjects introduced to the curriculum, construction and food, now have suitable curriculum plans in place. These plans have been well thought through so that pupils learn the knowledge they will need to achieve recognised qualifications in these subjects. Pupils completing these courses have the foundations needed to progress to higher-level qualifications in these subjects at college.

Leaders now regularly check the quality of teaching. They know that there is still work to do in many subjects to identify the knowledge that pupils should know and understand. In some subjects, the chosen activities still do not help pupils learn the key information that teachers intend. A programme of training and support is now in place so that teachers can gain the knowledge needed to plan learning and make improvements to the quality of education across the curriculum.

At the time of the previous inspection, there was no plan in place to teach reading effectively. Leaders have established a strategy to teach reading and promote reading in all year groups. Leaders have chosen a phonics scheme to teach pupils who are at the early stages of reading, whatever their age. The scheme chosen has books that match pupils' phonics knowledge, while being appropriate to the interests of pupils of differing ages. Leaders are giving all pupils the opportunity to read high-quality texts over the course of the year. These include a mix of authors, modern and classic texts, including plays by Shakespeare, and a range of different genres of text. These strategies are in the early stages of implementation. It is too early to judge their impact.

A large number of pupils are still following part-time timetables and access learning away from the school. Leaders have reviewed provision for these pupils with the local authority. They have given greater thought to how they use other alternative providers, tutors and part-time timetables effectively. This is helping the pupils concerned to receive a curriculum that better meets their needs and future aspirations. Leaders have increased the time these pupils spend learning each week. Now some are spending more time

learning in the school in addition to elsewhere. This is helping pupils re-engage with education.

Leaders acknowledge that the school has been unable to meet the needs of some pupils referred by the local authority. Leaders are working with the local authority to agree on a shared vision and purpose for the school. They are working to ensure that the provision will be better suited to the needs of pupils for whom the local authority commissions places. The local authority's educational psychology service has planned to support school leaders in analysing pupils' needs and putting appropriate provision in place. An additional SENCo has been appointed to assist with more timely and accurate identification of the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders report that the local authority is also now represented at the annual reviews for pupils with EHC plans. This is ensuring that revised EHC plans have clearer targets and outcomes related to pupils' range of needs. Teachers now have more information about pupils with SEND, including strategies to support their learning and behaviour. However, teachers are not routinely using this information to adapt their teaching. As a result, pupils with SEND are not experiencing a good enough quality of education overall. Further training for teachers to improve curriculum planning and teaching for pupils with SEND is planned.

Leaders have established systems to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance. There are early signs that these are having a positive impact. Clear expectations of pupils' behaviour are now in place. There is now a system of rewards and consequences that did not exist when the school was previously inspected. Pupils say that behaviour has improved because consequences are now clear. Improved teaching means pupils are involved in more meaningful learning, and there is less disruption as a result. Teachers are receiving the training they need to manage challenging behaviour appropriately and reduce the need for physical intervention. Leaders have established more rigorous systems to follow up on absence and challenge poor attendance. Attendance has improved, including for some pupils who have frequently missed school in the past. However, there remains work to be done to improve behaviour and attendance further. Incidents of poor behaviour, including those that lead to pupils and staff being unsafe, have been reduced but have not been eradicated. Suspensions remain high for some pupils who are not being supported to make the right behaviour choices. Some teachers are not using the new behaviour system consistently and it needs time to become embedded.

Leaders are developing a coherently planned programme to promote pupils' personal development. A new curriculum plan for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is in place. Leaders are working with external organisations to develop the school's personal development programme and provide teachers with the training needed to help them teach all elements of PSHE confidently and effectively. Pupils have contributed to setting the expectations for behaviour, relationships and learning in the school that make up 'Being Olive'. Leaders are establishing a student council to enable pupils to contribute their views and play a more active, responsible role in the wider life of the school. There are credible plans to improve the careers information and guidance that pupils receive. Current Year 11 pupils who are applying for college places or exploring future careers feel well supported in doing so. However, there are still some pupils whose

future destinations are unknown. They are at risk of not moving on to education, employment or training when they leave the school.

Staff are supportive of the actions that leaders are taking. They understand the need for improvement and are positive about the training and development that they have received so far. They understand that there is much work to be done but feel leaders are considerate of their well-being and workload. Members of the IPB and trust staff have the expertise and knowledge needed to support and challenge school leaders to bring about improvements. Some members of the IPB work in schools that are not part of the Olive Academies Trust or are members of other multi-academy trusts. They bring an independent perspective to the school's improvement work.

Additional support

The trust has strengthened school leadership through the appointment of an executive headteacher, an interim deputy headteacher and an additional SENCo. These leaders are assisting with curriculum development and are helping to check on the quality of provision more closely. Trust subject leaders from other schools are supporting the development of curriculum plans across a range of subjects. This work is providing teachers and leaders with the knowledge and expertise that they need to be effective in their roles and bring about further, sustained improvement.

The trust has sought external support to complement and add to what it can provide. A consultant has been commissioned to provide an external view of the progress that leaders are making in improving provision. External advice has been purchased to assist with developing the new personal development and PSHE programme. Leaders have also used external providers for training for behaviour management and a safeguarding review.

The local authority has provided some funding to secure suitable alternative provision for some pupils. The educational psychology service, in addition to reviewing provision, has also provided guidance and support for staff.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, executive headteacher, other senior leaders and the chief executive officer of the Olive Academies Trust. The inspector had remote meetings with three members of the academy improvement board and the assistant director for inclusion at Suffolk County Council. To gather pupils' views, the inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils when visiting lessons. The inspector met with a group of staff and considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The inspector considered the 42 responses submitted this academic year to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including six free-text responses submitted during the monitoring inspection.