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3 August 2022

Kathryn Evans
Principal
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Dear Mrs Evans

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy

Following my visit with Amanda Downing, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Elaine Mawson HMI, David Roberts, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and Lynne Selkirk OI, to your school on 5 and 6 July 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 December 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our 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 school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.
Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.**

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 July 2022

Context

Shortly after the section 5 inspection, the school joined the Ormiston Academies Trust. As a result, the trust was not required to submit a statement of action.

Since the previous inspection in March 2021, a new chair of the local governing body (LGB) has been appointed. Two governors have left the LGB and three have joined.

The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team (SLT) have been further refined. One member of SLT will step down from their post in July 2022. A new senior leader will join the school in September 2022. Three subject leaders have joined the school since the previous inspection. Eight teachers have left the school and one has joined. Six support staff have left the school and 16 have joined.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders and governors have developed appropriate plans to bring about improvement to the key areas of weakness identified in the previous inspection report. Governors make highly effective use of these plans, alongside their knowledge and expertise of education, to provide robust challenge and support for leaders.

Trust leaders are ensuring that senior and middle leaders receive the support and guidance that they need to better undertake their roles. This means that leadership capacity is increasing. Nonetheless, the leadership of some areas of the school and some subjects are still dependent on significant additional support.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have further strengthened the culture of safeguarding. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding themes and how to report concerns. Leaders take rigorous action when concerns are raised. Pupils and students feel safe and well looked after.

Leaders have improved the curriculum offer for pupils and students in the sixth form. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from a suitably broad curriculum. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, and students in the sixth form, can choose freely from a wider and more aspirational range of academic and vocational subjects. However, too few pupils in Years 10 and 11 currently choose to study a suitably broad range of subjects. Furthermore, the previous experiences of students in Years 12 and 13 mean they are not always sufficiently prepared to aspire to the new, more ambitious sixth-form curriculum.

Subject leaders are being supported well to develop subject curriculums. Increasingly, curriculum thinking is more focused on the important content that pupils should learn and the order in which it should be taught. However, this is not consistently the case for all subjects or all age ranges. In particular, curriculum thinking in some subjects in the sixth form are less well developed than elsewhere.

Leaders carefully check how well the curriculum is delivered to pupils in Years 7 to 11. This is helping leaders to identify what is working well and what needs further refinement. Leaders are also using this information to tailor training to match teachers' needs. In the main, this is ensuring that teachers' subject and curriculum knowledge is secure. Teachers often identify suitable starting points to build on what pupils already know. However, they do not always think carefully enough about the purpose of the activities that pupils complete. Some activities are not focused on the important knowledge that pupils should learn. This means that teachers are not fully able to spot and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, pupils' recall and use of what they have previously learned remains uneven and often weak across subjects.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum delivery in the sixth form. They are beginning to support more staff to develop their knowledge and practice in this area. The delivery of the curriculum in the sixth form is beginning to improve, but it remains uneven. In some subjects, teachers do not have the clarity that they need about what students should learn. This means that teachers are not able to identify and address gaps in students' knowledge. There is significant variation in what students know and can do.

All pupils and students in the sixth form, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access the full range of curriculum content in the subjects that they study. Where necessary, staff provide additional short-term support for pupils with SEND in place of the usual curriculum. Staff ensure that this support is temporary and focused on getting these pupils ready to access their full curriculum entitlement.

Leaders ensure that staff are well guided about how to support pupils, and students in the sixth form, with SEND. While the support for these pupils is improving in some areas, it is still mixed. Some teachers make effective use of helpful information about pupils' additional needs. These teachers pinpoint the areas where pupils struggle. Teachers then provide appropriate support to enable pupils to overcome the barriers to their learning. Teaching assistants often help pupils to break down what they are learning into more manageable chunks. However, many teachers do not have the same depth of knowledge to offer a similar level of effective support to pupils with SEND. In some cases, teachers' support is not informed by a clear enough understanding of pupils' specific barriers to learning.

Leaders have taken positive steps to identify pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. Leaders are also making appropriate use of expertise to ensure that pupils receive more effective support to help them read fluently. However, this approach is relatively new. It has not had enough impact in ensuring that those pupils who find reading difficult can access the curriculum fully.

Pupils' behaviour is variable. Many pupils behave well in class and around school. However, some pupils behave poorly. Their behaviour significantly disrupts lessons and the wider school environment. Some pupils, parents and carers feel that name calling and/or bullying are persistent issues. Staff do not deal with behaviour consistently well.

Some staff do not follow the agreed behaviour management systems. Leaders are aware of this shortcoming and the negative impact that poor behaviour is having on pupils' learning. They have devised much needed, concrete plans to tackle these issues, including plans to better support the specific needs of pupils whose behaviour is most disruptive.

Leaders are taking appropriate steps to reduce pupils' absence rates. For example, staff are using effective approaches to challenge pupils' absence from school and to support them to attend regularly. Leaders' actions are beginning to make a difference. For instance, they are reducing some long-standing gaps in the attendance of different groups of pupils, for example, those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEND.

Leaders are successfully establishing a wide range of enrichment opportunities for pupils. Leaders closely track and review the participation of different groups of pupils including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND. Through this, leaders are ensuring greater equality in the school's wider opportunities offer.

Staff are positive about the changes that are leading to improvements at the school. Many staff feel motivated. They appreciate leaders' willingness to listen and to consider staff's workload. Teachers, including early careers teachers, who spoke to inspectors said that they feel well-supported. They appreciate the professional development that they are receiving to help them to improve their classroom practice and behaviour management.

Additional support

Leaders use the support from trust leaders effectively. This support is helping to build capacity by strengthening senior leaders' knowledge, skills and experience. Lead practitioners from the trust are supporting subject leaders to strengthen their leadership of curriculum areas. Leaders are successfully using this to improve the delivery of the curriculum. Leaders are also using the support of a trust lead practitioner to further develop the quality of education on offer in the sixth form.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal and other senior leaders. They met with trust leaders and members of the local governing body. Inspectors also met with representatives of Halton local authority.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. They met with groups of subject leaders, teachers and pupils to talk about the curriculum. They visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and the records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They spoke with leaders who have responsibility for reading and SEND.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.