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Andrew Bent, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Christian Wilcocks, Chief Executive Officer
Omega Multi-Academy Trust
Lingley Green Avenue
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Dear Mr Bent and Mr Wilcocks

Summary evaluation of Omega Multi-Academy Trust

Following the summary evaluation of Omega Multi-Academy Trust (or 'the trust') in November 2022, when I was accompanied by Julie Yarwood, Ofsted Inspector, I am writing on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings.

Thank you for your cooperation during our visit to the trust on 14 to 16 November. Please pass on our thanks to your staff and other stakeholders who kindly gave up their time to meet us.

The findings from the summary evaluation, and a wider consideration of the trust's overall performance, are set out below.

Summary of evidence gathering activities

For stage 1 of this summary evaluation, four schools were inspected between February 2022 and May 2022. All these inspections were carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 (the Act), as amended.

The inspection outcomes were:

- all four schools had their first ungraded inspections as academy convertors
- three schools retained their judgement of good
- one school retained its outstanding grade; however, the evidence suggested that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now.

Over the course of the on-site visit to the trust, discussions were held with you and other senior and operational staff. We met with six representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair and vice-chair of the board. We visited two trust schools that had not been inspected during stage 1 of the summary evaluation process. In each of these schools, we met with the principal, other senior leaders, a selection of leaders responsible for subjects and several early career teachers.

Context

Omega Multi-Academy Trust is a multi-phase academy trust. The trust comprises four primary schools and two secondary schools. Pupils at the trust's schools range from the ages of four to 18. The schools are situated in the local authorities of Warrington and Liverpool. The trust was established in 2013.

The trust's schools vary in size from around 210 pupils in Park Road Community Primary School to just below 2,130 pupils in Great Sankey High School.

At the time of the summary evaluation, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the trust was 26.8%, which is in line with the national average. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils at Alsop High School is 60%, which is considerably higher than the number of disadvantaged pupils in other schools in the trust.

The proportion of pupils in the trust with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is lower than the national average.

The board of trustees is made up of seven members. This group is responsible for the strategic oversight and performance of the trust and its schools. The chief executive officer (CEO) joined the trust in May 2022.

Main findings

Currently, the inspection outcomes for the trust's academies, which includes the most recent inspections, are as follows:

- one school is judged to be outstanding
- four schools are judged to be good
- one school has yet to be inspected since joining the trust. (When its predecessor school, Alsop High School, was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2019, it was judged to be inadequate.)

Impact of the trust on its academies – governance and delegation

- Since the appointment of the CEO, executive leaders have developed a clear and unambiguous vision for the schools in the trust. There are two distinct strands to this vision. The first is that trustees and executive leaders are determined to ensure that all pupils receive the highest quality of education. The second strand of the vision is that Omega Multi-Academy Trust should strive to be the best employer that it can be. The CEO and his team of executive leaders all speak with purpose and clarity about the trust's ambitions for all pupils. This is irrespective of pupils' background or ability. This vision has been embraced by all schools in the trust.
- The CEO has carried out a full strategic review of the systems and structures that underpin the work of the trust. Executive leaders' roles have also been clarified. This has successfully enabled the production of well-thought-out, appropriate strategic priorities which align with the contextual needs of the trust schools. There is a strong sense of pace and momentum to improve educational outcomes for pupils. School leaders have welcomed the recent changes and clarity of direction, which are already having a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Furthermore, primary school leaders said that they, and their pupils, are now benefiting more fully from being part of this trust.
- Suitable governance structures and clear lines of accountability are in place. Trustees carefully delegate considerable responsibility for the performance of individual schools to local governing bodies. For example, the recently formed standards and safeguarding committee is further strengthening lines of communication between trustees and local governing bodies. Recently, more educational expertise has been added to the board of trustees. Trustees are unrelenting in their drive to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.
- The CEO provides strong, strategic leadership. He has a forensic understanding of the trust's strengths and weaknesses. Regularly brokered external audits give trustees assurances that their self-evaluation process is accurate. Together with the executive team, the CEO has accurately identified the school improvement priorities from the stage 1 inspections. Trustees and executive leaders are working to integrate pupil voice as a regular feature of self-evaluation.

Impact of the trust on its academies – leadership and management

- Executive leaders have recently cultivated a culture of transparent self-evaluation and improvement across the trust. School leaders have autonomy for the creation and implementation of policies, except for safeguarding and human resources, which are driven centrally from the trust. Executive leaders

are at the early stages of ensuring that school policies have fidelity to the trust-wide guiding principles.

- The CEO has transformed how well executive leaders hold individual academy leaders to account. The new 'headteacher entitlement', which is a package of support, mandates evidence-informed collaborative review and facilitated self-evaluation. This is the universal offer that all headteachers across the trust receive. Although in the early stages of implementation, school leaders and staff are incredibly positive about the impact that this approach is already having on school improvement.
- As well as the headteacher entitlement, executive leaders are supporting those schools that are improving rapidly. This includes carrying out half-termly monitoring visits. Executive leaders have addressed the inward-facing nature of the trust. Now, as an outward-facing organisation, the trust engages well with both Warrington and Liverpool local authorities. For example, leaders can now draw on external expertise from within the local authorities themselves and from their wider connections. Leaders also intend to reciprocate this support by contributing to local authorities' wider school improvement plans.
- There is a rigorous approach to staff development at all levels. The trust has an aim to 'grow its own leaders'. This new strategic approach is ensuring that leadership development within the trust, modelled by the CEO, is taking place. Additionally, the development of subject networks within the trust is also contributing to the growth and development of leaders at all levels.
- The CEO is committed to investing in staff well-being. Executive leaders have introduced the Omega MAT+ package to improve working conditions. School leaders appreciate the recent initiatives to support with their workload. Trustees, along with the CEO, are determined to recruit and retain the right people to help implement their vision. The support that executive leaders offer makes the trust an attractive employer. For example, early career teachers said that this employer is committed to nurturing their talents. They were effusive about the support that they receive.

Impact of the trust on its academies – curriculum and quality of education

- School leaders across the trust are fiercely protective of the autonomy that they have for the design of the curriculum. Executive leaders value the different contexts and diverse cohorts of pupils within the schools of the Omega Multi-Academy Trust. However, the overarching trust principle is that the curriculum is equitable and accessible for all pupils.
- Primary headteachers currently work together to quality assure the curriculum across different schools. This is working well in this phase, as reflected by the strong stage 1 Ofsted inspection outcomes. However, as the trust evolves, primary leaders are keen to influence the transition that pupils make from key

stage 2 to 3. This is to ensure that pupils build on their strong foundations in the primary phase as they move into secondary education. Aspects of this work are beginning to take place through the recently implemented facilitated self-review and school-to-school support programmes.

- Within the secondary phase, school leaders have had external support to review and design their curriculums. This work is ongoing. Executive leaders recognise that there are some weaknesses in how well the curriculum meets the needs of pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.
- The systems for disseminating best educational practice have been established by executive leaders. However, some are in their infancy. The focus to date has been on improving pedagogy in the classroom through 'deliberate practice clinics' to train staff. To optimise the use of these clinics, executive leaders have made sure that there are trained staff in each school to deliver an instructional coaching programme. This has helped to galvanise staff, improve the delivery of the curriculum, and secure a shift to the trust mindset. While the trust school improvement offer has been predominantly targeted towards secondary schools, there are clear plans to extend the school improvement offer to include the primary schools.
- The CEO has overhauled the mechanisms for holding school leaders to account. The CEO leads regular review meetings with school leaders to gather in-depth information about the quality of education across the trust. This enables the CEO to identify issues and broker the most effective support, including from external sources. Executive leaders accept that there is further work needed to review their quality assurance processes at trust level to ensure that the information provided to them by school leaders is accurate.

Impact of the trust on its academies – Behaviour and Attitudes

- Similar to the curriculum, the policies for behaviour and attendance are developed at the autonomy of the individual schools. Local governing bodies provide appropriate challenge to school leaders in primary settings to maintain the secure behaviour and attendance of pupils. They are increasing the rigour in which they evaluate the behaviour and attendance of pupils in secondary schools.
- Behaviour and attendance were strengths in the inspections that took place in the primary schools in stage 1 of the summary evaluation. However, executive leaders have identified that both secondary schools in the trust need to improve pupils' behaviour. The CEO has facilitated behaviour support from the central trust team for the two secondary schools. Executive leaders visit these schools often to coach leaders to improve pupils' behaviour. The CEO has also been proactive in securing external support from other multi-academy trusts.

- Trustees are the decision-makers in relation to any pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. They successfully monitor the rates of suspensions across the trust and analyse patterns within pupil groups. Executive leaders have also acted swiftly to improve the quality of information available to trustees and executive leaders in relation to pupils' attendance and behaviour. This is so that they have the information at their fingertips to hold leaders in individual schools to account more effectively. The appointment of the trust data manager has been key to driving this priority, and development of the trust-wide data system is well under way.
- Executive leaders are acting judiciously to reduce the use of unregistered alternative provision by school leaders. Executive leaders have a clear oversight of pupils who attend alternative provision, and of those pupils who have been moved from one trust school to another. Executive leaders closely monitor the behaviour and attendance of these pupils, as well as the quality of the curriculum that they are following. Summary reports are routinely provided to trustees through the safeguarding and standards committee.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding was judged to be effective in all inspections completed as part of stage 1 of this summary evaluation.

Trustees have appointed a safeguarding leader with considerable knowledge and expertise. The trust-wide approach to safeguarding is effective. Support from the safeguarding trust leader is highly valued by the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) in schools. This includes the supervision in place to look after DSLs' well-being. The trust safeguarding leader meets weekly with the DSLs in individual schools to evaluate safeguarding practices. This enables the executive leaders to have an oversight of vulnerable pupils and any safeguarding concerns across the trust.

In addition to the weekly meetings, the trust safeguarding leader disseminates regular safeguarding updates to DSLs. There is a collaborative approach to safeguarding. Trust DSLs meet regularly as a group to discuss safeguarding trends and priorities across the trust. The training delivered by the trust safeguarding leader and external partners is responsive to the needs of individual schools. DSLs are empowered to make effective decisions in the best interests of pupils. They welcome the consistency and reassurance from the trust. This helps to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the timely support that they need.

Recommendations

- Fully review the curriculum so that executive leaders can assure themselves that the subject content in all settings, across both primary and secondary phases, is ambitious and meets the needs of all pupils. This includes those pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.
- Further develop the trust's school improvement offer to ensure that it tightly matches the needs of individual schools across both primary and secondary phases.
- Continue to embed the trust's processes for gathering information about attendance, behaviour and achievement. This is so that executive leaders and trustees have the information at their fingertips to hold school leaders to account more fully.
- Review the trust's quality assurance processes so that executive leaders can assure themselves that the information provided to them by school leaders is reliable and robust.
- Further develop the programme of school-to-school support, including cross-phase support, using school leaders' expertise to facilitate the sharing and dissemination of good practice across the trust.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Goodwin
His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Academies that are part of the trust

School Information				Most recent inspection		
URN	School name	Local Authority	Date joined trust	Does the inspection relate to the school in its current form?	Inspection date	OE grade
145387	Park Road Community Primary School	Warrington	01/01/2018	Yes	06/04/2022	2
145388	Chapelford Village Primary School	Warrington	01/01/2018	Yes	17/03/2022	2
145389	Westbrook Old Hall Primary School	Warrington	01/01/2018	Yes	05/05/2022	2
145390	Burtonwood Community Primary School	Warrington	01/01/2018	Yes	10/02/2022	1
148226	Alsop High School	Liverpool	11/01/2020	Yes	09/05/2019	4
139152	Great Sankey High School	Warrington	01/01/2013	Yes	20/09/2017	2

*Schools highlighted received either a graded, ungraded or monitoring inspection in stage 1 of the MAT SE