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Dear Gemma Trattles

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Outwood Academy Ormesby

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 26 April 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in July 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders of the multi-academy trust the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, observed social times, spoke to groups of pupils and staff and scrutinised documents relating to behaviour and attendance. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Outwood Academy Ormesby remains inadequate and has serious weaknesses. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the last inspection, the substantive principal has left their role at the school. You have been acting as principal pending the arrival of the newly appointed principal later in the summer term. Executive leaders from the trust have also spent considerable time in the school to add leadership capacity. There have been additional appointments to the pastoral and attendance teams, and more are planned. My main focus during this visit

was on how leaders have sought to address the issues around assessment and behaviour and attitudes that were identified at the previous inspection.

In September 2022, a new behaviour policy was launched. This has focused on ensuring that pupils' positive behaviour is recognised through rewards and praise. Staff have received training to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently. Leaders have recognised that they need to change aspects of the culture at the school. A 'personal development centre' to work with specific pupils, and help to avoid suspensions, has been launched to support this. There is evidence that this work is beginning to have an impact. When I visited the school, the atmosphere around the site and in lessons was calm. Relationships between pupils and teachers were positive.

The number of suspensions is falling, particularly for some of the most vulnerable groups of pupils. Pupils spoke positively about the trips they can go on as part of the rewards system. However, further work remains to be done. Some pupils commented that behaviour in lessons is inconsistent and that they still hear derogatory language regularly. You are aware of these issues and are confident that steps such as increased staffing, for example in the pastoral team, will, in the longer term, provide capacity to continue to tackle this.

Most pupils I spoke with felt that bullying was not an issue. However, for a small number of pupils, bullying remains a problem. Some of these pupils are not confident that it is tackled well. Since the inspection in July 2022, a new tracking system has been launched so that 'unkind comments' are logged. Leaders use this information to help them identify potential bullying and intervene as necessary. There is evidence of success using this approach but it is still in the early stages. More time is needed for the full impact of this approach to be felt across the school.

You and other leaders are clear that, to tackle the problems identified at the last inspection, pupils need to be in school. In recent months, there has been a strong focus on strengthening the teams and systems around attendance. The attendance team is set to double in size in the coming months. This, along with other changes to staffing structures and recruitment, has been designed to ensure changes are sustainable. Clear systems are in place to track internal truancy and deal with this quickly. There is evidence that this is starting to have an impact. While you know that persistent absence remains high, it is beginning to fall. For some groups, for example current Year 11 pupils, persistent absence has fallen significantly.

Leaders at all levels share the belief that better engagement with parents will help to support pupils to be successful at school. A new forum for gathering the views of parents has recently been set up. Regular communication with parents to encourage attendance takes place. The role of reintegration manager has been created so parents have a specific point of contact when pupils return after suspension. Channels of communication with parents have been reviewed. There are plans in place to work with families as part of the 'thrive' model that the school has adopted. As with other aspects of the improvement

journey to date, the structures being adopted need time to embed so that the impact can be felt.

In order to tackle the identified weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the gaps in pupils' knowledge, you have introduced the 'five pillars' approach in lessons. This is designed to ensure that teachers focus on the ways in which they introduce new information to pupils and link it to previously taught content. Teachers are positive about the training they have received to implement this.

The addition of a second special educational needs coordinator is providing extra capacity to identify and support the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. One particularly successful aspect of this work is the creation of the Year 7 'elevate' group to support those pupils identified as needing extra help to access the secondary curriculum. There is a stronger focus on supporting and identifying the weakest readers. You are aware of the need to continue to identify and remove barriers to learning in order to improve pupils' attitudes to school and engineer success.

You are in the process of bringing together groups of external agencies to ensure that there are multiple voices working together to help move the school forward. This includes a youth worker based in the school to begin to link the support offered in school with the help offered in the community.

Governance structures have been redesigned. An academy improvement board (AIB) has been put in place with representatives from outside the school and the trust. They have played a key role in designing the action plan to improve the school and there are regular reviews of progress against identified priorities. The trust receives clear information from the AIB and the local governing council. At all levels, leaders understand the issues facing the school. There is no complacency regarding the work that remains to be done. The vision for the school has been shared with staff. The staff I spoke with feel positive about the steps taken so far to move the school forward and feel that changes are being introduced incrementally and sustainably. They feel well supported by you and your leadership team as the necessary changes to the school are implemented.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Middlesbrough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vellensworth
His Majesty's Inspector