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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 February 2024

Gemma Trattles
Associate Executive Principal
Outwood Academy Ormesby
Tothill Avenue
Netherfields
Middlesbrough
Cleveland
TS3 0RH

Dear Gemma Trattles

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Outwood Academy Ormesby

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 23 January 2024, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in July 2022.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, including from 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.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to be no longer judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since my previous visit in April 2023, a new principal took up post in May 2023. They have since left the school. As a result, you continue to act as principal on a day-to-day basis. There continues to be additional support from the trust to ensure there is sufficient leadership capacity in the school. The new structures of the pastoral and attendance teams have been embedded. More staff are now in roles to support the strategies to improve attendance and behaviour. You are planning further appointments to specific posts aimed at developing relationships with parents.

My focus during this visit was on the strategies developed to continue to address the issues around behaviour and attitudes that were identified at the inspection in July 2022.

There has been considerable work to improve punctuality to lessons and decrease internal truancy. This system is proving to be successful. Pupils and staff understand the system very well. Lesson changeovers are calm and swift because pupils understand the need to arrive at lessons promptly. While sanctions are in place for latecomers to lessons, this is only necessary for a handful of pupils. This new system means that lessons begin smoothly. It has allowed teachers to focus on praising pupils, creating a positive atmosphere. Lessons are not disrupted by latecomers to lessons. During my visit, the school site was calm. Pupils were focused on the activities planned by teachers.

Pupils recognise that behaviour around the school is improving. Pupils are asked to 'say it again, say it better' when they use inappropriate language. This is encouraging more thoughtful and kinder use of language across the school. Younger pupils in the school reported to me that they did not hear derogatory language. Some older pupils still encounter discriminatory language but are confident that this is challenged by teachers. It is becoming less frequent. Pupils are confident in reporting bullying and other concerns to pastoral leaders as they feel that it will be dealt with and they will be helped. Records of bullying and discriminatory incidents show that this type of behaviour is falling. The actions we discussed during my previous visit, to ensure that there were strong systems to track bullying and discriminatory language, are having an impact.

You recognise that suspensions remain too high. There is evidence of appropriate intervention being successful with some pupils, for example through the use of bespoke timetables and the adoption of the 'thrive' approach to help you understand and support pupils' emotional well-being. However, there are still a significant number of incidents leading to suspension, and this is not currently showing any significant fall. There are several strategies in place to address this. For example, you have plans to further develop relationships with pupils and their families through employing a family support worker. You are exploring possible venues in the community where meetings can safely take place away from school. Communication to families has been improved.

There is a renewed focus on praising the positives. When I visited, pupils' work was being celebrated at dinner time through the 'proud Tuesday' initiative. All leaders across the

school recognise the need to reduce suspensions to help ensure that all pupils can take advantage of the positive changes happening at the school.

The introduction of the on-site 'tenemos' provision has been a particularly successful intervention for small cohorts of identified Years 8 and 9 pupils. This provision is designed to support attendance and behaviour for those pupils who may struggle in mainstream lessons. The evidence shows that it has reduced rates of suspension for some pupils and has had a significant positive impact on the attendance of the pupils involved. You are planning to expand this provision and the strategies used to spread this success across the school.

While there has been success in reducing internal truancy, overall rates of attendance remain an issue. You are aware of this, as are those responsible for governance. Significant resources are being utilised to address the problem. However, the school's efforts to date are not currently having the desired impact on improving overall levels of attendance.

Despite this, I am reassured that improving attendance remains an important priority for the school. Attendance and pastoral teams work together closely to plan interventions around attendance for specific pupils. Form tutors play a key role in speaking to pupils and making calls home to those who are persistently absent. Rewards, praise and assemblies are linked to attendance to ensure that it remains an important topic. Pupils that I spoke with know what their attendance is and report regular conversations about this. To reach those pupils who are absent, there are regular home visits. Projects with the Department for Work and Pensions are underway to offer wider support for families. You are involved in projects with national charities and have developed the 'tenemos' provision noted above. Many pupils are starting to become involved in these projects and programmes.

In order to make wider changes in attitudes to attendance, programmes designed to build relationships between school and the community are underway. Governors attend sessions where they meet parents to hear concerns and look at ways in which the school can support them. In-school events are planned, for example Year 11 revision evenings and information evenings for younger pupils, to help parents understand how to support pupils and to build points of contact and familiarity. In this way, you are beginning to make changes to the culture and attitudes that surround attendance at school.

Conversations with staff show that they share the views of pupils that behaviour at the school is improving. They are positive about the journey the school is on and the support they receive to adopt new policies and procedures. They are kept well informed about changes to policy and receive appropriate training when changes are made. The trust continues to direct significant resources to support the school, for example through trust directors working at the school regularly, particularly for attendance. Across the course of my visit, it was clear that leaders at all levels recognise that though positive progress is being made, there remains work to be done to make cultural changes for the benefit of all pupils.

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