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Mrs Tracey Norriss
Headteacher
Oasis Academy Parkwood
Plymouth Road
Scunthorpe
Lincolnshire
DN17 1SS

Dear Mrs Norriss

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oasis Academy Parkwood, North Lincolnshire

Following my visit to your academy on 15 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, members of the academy council and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- clarify what success will look like at interim checks so that pupils and the whole school community know exactly what leaders expect
- make sure the most able pupils have suitably challenging work that takes into account their existing knowledge, understanding and skills
- ensure teachers' written comments on pupils' work are of a consistently high quality
- promote pupils' respect for diversity, particularly towards those who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgendered.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, members of the academy council and the regional director for the academy's sponsor to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I had brief conversations with two middle leaders and a phone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I observed pupils at playtime and spoke informally with a small number of pupils. I evaluated the academy's improvement plan and considered the academy's internal data. Accompanied by you, I took a tour of the academy and made a series of brief lesson visits during which we looked at pupils' work.

Context

Since the academy's last full inspection, an assistant principal has been appointed from the existing staff and leaders are seeking to recruit another.

Main findings

You have taken decisive action to improve teaching by making your expectations clear. Teachers are under no illusion that nothing less than good will do and they have responded positively to this challenge. For example, teachers are now using pupils' progress checks to work out which individuals and groups of pupils are not making as much progress as they should. This is helping teachers to plan work to help pupils catch up. Some teachers are doing this very well and pupils are suitably challenged from the outset. However, this is not always the case and work in pupils' books shows that too often pupils of different abilities work through the same tasks at the same rate. Consequently, the most able pupils are sometimes doing things they can already do and this slows their progress.

Teachers' marking has improved. Teachers consistently write comments on pupils' work to suggest the next steps they need to take to improve. Some of these comments are precise and of a high quality but not all marking is of this standard.

The academy has had marked success in improving the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). The most recent check showed a clear improvement in the number of pupils achieving the level expected for their age. Leaders and teachers are carefully developing a rich reading and writing environment. Walls and displays are lively and engaging, they are used effectively to support learning. This is not as strong with numeracy but this is starting to develop, for example, one corridor is devoted to highlighting mathematical vocabulary.

The academy's development plan identifies the right priorities and it is clear in highlighting leaders' roles and responsibilities. However, the plan is not clear enough about what leaders will expect to see when they make interim checks. This makes it difficult to evaluate if actions are having the desired effect.

Leaders have improved and simplified the academy's internal data and this is supporting middle and senior leaders in developing their skills in checking on the quality of the academy's work. They can see quickly if any group of pupils are falling behind and work with teachers to take swift action.

Teaching assistants now have time to plan with class teachers how they will support pupils' learning. They have also attended training to help them to understand how they can make their work more effective. However, it is too soon to evaluate any clear impact on the quality of pupils' learning and there are still occasions when teaching assistants simply stand and listen to the teacher.

Pupils continue to behave well, they wear their uniform smartly and they are friendly and well-mannered. However, the academy has not paid enough attention to developing pupils' respect for all groups of people in society, particularly those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered. Consequently pupils' attitudes in this respect are occasionally immature.

The governance provided by the academy's sponsor continues to offer a sharp challenge with well-judged support. High expectations have promoted a sense of purpose in the school. This is demonstrated most clearly by teachers' and leaders' determination to meet the challenging targets set by the sponsor.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The academy has maintained a purposeful relationship with the local authority. Regular visits to the academy by an improvement officer have been effective in helping you and other senior leaders to keep an objective eye on how well the academy is doing.

Senior and middle leaders are also benefitting from working with other schools that are also sponsored by the Oasis Community Learning trust. They are tackling their work with increasing confidence supported by an improving grasp of their responsibilities.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the academy council.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector