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Patrice Canavan OBE  
Headteacher  
Oaklands School  
Old Bethnal Green Road  
Bethnal Green  
London  
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Dear Mrs Canavan

### **Short inspection of Oaklands School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017 with Niall Gallagher, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Together with your leadership team, you have worked relentlessly to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. The impact of your efforts is evident in the strong progress pupils have made over time. This focus is visible in the way teachers provide pupils with clear explanations so they know how to improve their work.

You have established a culture of high expectations and aspirations for your pupils. The pupils respond by working hard and setting high targets for themselves. A great strength of the school is the constant reflection by the headteacher on 'how do we do better?'

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. They say their opinions and their views are listened to and acted on by you and your team. Pupils listen attentively in class. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are respectful. All the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that their teachers give them a great deal of support to help them learn well.

Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 4 in GCSE examinations are above those achieved by pupils in other schools with similar starting points. Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Senior leaders evaluate this funding carefully to ensure

there is maximum impact for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make good and often better progress than that of pupils with similar starting points in other schools.

Leaders re-organised the care and guidance support last year. This change has had a positive impact on reducing the number of incidents of poor behaviour, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils who spoke to inspectors said they like the school. Staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire said that pupils' behaviour is good.

Developing further careers advice and guidance for pupils in key stage 3 is an area that is under review by leaders, but has not yet been fully addressed. The guidance relating to this in Year 7 and Year 8 is currently quite limited in time and scope.

Sometimes leaders do not monitor outcomes rigorously or evaluate actions sharply enough. In a few instances, leaders are not fully aware of the impact of their actions on pupils' progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that all appropriate employment checks for staff are carried out and a record of safeguarding training is maintained. All staff have been issued with the most recent guidance on safeguarding and further training was taking place during the week of the inspection. Staff who spoke with inspectors say they understand and are confident of the steps to take with regard to safeguarding concerns. New staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction to the school. Senior leaders have all undertaken additional training in safeguarding. Referrals to the local authority around safeguarding concerns are made promptly and followed up diligently. The training and focus on safeguarding promotes a safe environment for pupils.

Pupils who met with inspectors say that they feel safe in school. Assemblies on avoiding radicalisation and other risks, such as involvement in gangs, are led by older students. Sixth form students are given opportunities to work with younger pupils with care and guidance support, as well as in their learning.

Pupils' behaviour during social times and around the school during the inspection indicated that they manage their own behaviour very well. There was a high staff presence, but staff were not required to intervene to manage behaviour. There are no pupils currently in alternative provision but leaders do ensure that all alternative provision is thoroughly checked.

The safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to speak to pupils to confirm that pupils feel safe in school. Governors also ensure that safeguarding concerns are monitored during governing body meetings.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders have an in-depth awareness of the areas for development in the school. The headteacher and her senior team have clear plans in place to address these areas.
- On occasions, governors do not challenge senior leaders effectively about all aspects of their work to improve the school. This is because they rely on information provided by senior leaders about current pupils without making further checks.
- Leaders acknowledge that their communication with parents needs strengthening. The school uses a variety of methods for communicating effectively with parents. This includes newsletters and the school website. However, at the time of the inspection, there were gaps in some of this information. Leaders are working to address this quickly.
- Leaders reviewed the subjects offered at GCSE and in the sixth form following evaluation of pupils' outcomes in public examinations. Leaders have put in place a wider range of vocational courses to meet the needs of students currently in the sixth form. Senior leaders recognised that the level 2 courses offered were not enabling pupils to achieve to the very best of their capabilities, and they have therefore discontinued these courses. However, the impact of changes to the sixth form provision is not always monitored and evaluated for current students.
- Careful monitoring by senior leaders of the students who are not in education, employment or training after leaving school has ensured that this group is now very small and below national averages. The leader in the sixth form supports students well with university applications.
- Attendance for all pupils is above the national average. In 2014 and 2015, attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was significantly lower than that of similar pupils in other schools. The proportion of fixed-term exclusions for this group of pupils was well above national averages in 2014 and 2015. Leaders are addressing this by changing their approach to managing poor behaviour. They are monitoring attendance rigorously. The pastoral team introduced a restorative justice approach to reduce repeated incidents of poor behaviour. Pastoral leaders are providing greater support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is regular use of multi-agency panels to provide additional support for pupils. The attendance of current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved and the frequency of their exclusions is reducing.
- Pupils benefit from the support provided by teaching assistants. Teaching assistants help pupils' learning by breaking down tasks into simpler steps.
- Pupils are confident that teachers provide effective guidance on option choices. Parents and carers are involved in this process. In previous years, students' achievement in A-level examinations indicated that some girls may have chosen courses that were not well matched to their needs or future career aspirations. Leaders have ensured that girls are provided with more effective guidance when selecting their programmes of study in the sixth form. Consequently, girls currently in the sixth form are showing better progress across all academic

subjects. An increasing number of students are being accepted in Russell Group universities. The leader of careers guidance has rightly identified that further work is needed on careers guidance with pupils in key stage 3. There are clear plans in place to address this.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is greater rigour in the monitoring of the attendance and outcomes for different groups of pupils as well as the information available to parents
- careers advice and guidance are more widely available in Years 7 and 8 so that pupils make better-informed choices in their options, including those beyond school
- they sharpen their evaluation of new initiatives to ensure that they are having the desired impact on current pupils' progress and outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dame Joan McVittie  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- how effective governors are in monitoring safeguarding and in providing information to parents
- how effective the school leaders are in developing and monitoring the academic provision in the sixth form for girls
- how effective leaders are in improving behaviour and attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities
- how effective the careers information advice and guidance is both pre- and post-16, in advising pupils on both destinations and academic provision in the sixth form.

Inspectors met with leaders, governors and staff. They spoke to pupils formally and informally during lessons and social times. A telephone call was conducted with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors considered the responses from

parents, pupils and staff to Ofsted's online questionnaires. There was a small number of responses from parents. Inspectors visited 15 lessons during lesson walks and longer observations and listened to a group of Year 8 readers. They scrutinised a range of documents which related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and progress.