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Ms George Franks
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Franks

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oasis Academy Connaught

Following my visit to your school on 20 October 2017, 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- increase the number of pupils across the school achieving greater depth in writing.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, pupils and a governance representative to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated, alongside the school's own self-evaluation, middle leaders' action plans and the school's monitoring of teaching records. Attendance and safeguarding documents were also scrutinised. In addition,

a learning walk was undertaken by the lead inspector and the headteacher to observe pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been seven new teaching appointments, including two senior leaders. Three of these appointments are newly qualified teachers. Historically, recruitment and retention have been a challenge for the school.

Main findings

Led by the headteacher, senior leaders have been proactive and determined in their efforts to tackle the areas for improvement raised at the last inspection. The newly appointed deputy and assistant headteachers have brought with them a wide range of skills which complement those of the headteacher. Consequently, leaders are driving forward sustainable improvements with energy, commitment and integrity. Their actions are having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.

Leaders know the school well. They have a detailed, objective and comprehensive view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The areas for improvement from the last inspection underpin leaders' strategic planning. These plans are reviewed frequently in order to gauge pupils' progress.

Leadership capacity is also strengthening because middle leaders are now taking greater ownership of their work. They are working more closely with senior leaders and planning for improvement in a more strategic way. Middle leaders report that their contributions are valued by senior leaders and they feel trusted to exercise their responsibilities. Senior leaders support and challenge middle leaders in equal measure to ensure that they continue to develop in their roles.

Improvements to leadership are improving the quality of teaching and learning in turn. Leaders are meeting the training needs of staff by providing tailored professional development. Rigorous quality assurance systems are in place to manage the performance of staff and ensure consistency of practice. These systems are proving essential for maintaining the quality of teaching when new staff join the school. Recently appointed staff have provided an injection of expertise and enthusiasm which complements the valued experience of existing staff. This is having a positive influence on improving teaching, alongside new resources and teaching programmes, which are helping pupils to make more rapid progress.

Staff now have higher expectations of pupils who are being set more challenging work as a result. Teachers are planning activities that better meet the needs of different groups of pupils. As a result, pupils are engaged in their learning because they are interested in the activities and want to participate. One pupil who spoke

with the lead inspector said, 'They [teachers] make lessons more interesting.'

The most able pupils are challenged to think more deeply. For example, in one observed Year 6 lesson, pupils of different abilities were provided with different questions to help them write biographies of Rosa Parks. The most able pupils were required to consider more sophisticated questions such as, 'What does it [the text] mean by a quiet exemplification of courage, dignity and determination?'

Lower-ability pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants. They enable pupils to access their learning, think for themselves and make more rapid progress as a result. Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector reported that they are helped in different ways if they struggle with their learning. They understand that struggling is not something to be embarrassed about because it is an essential part of learning.

The improving quality of teaching is raising pupils' achievement by the time they leave the school. This was evident in pupils' outcomes in 2017. In reading and mathematics, pupils made progress that was in line with the top 10% of schools nationally. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that more pupils across the school need to achieve greater depth in their writing.

Attendance has improved since the time of the last inspection. For the current academic year, it is above average. This is because leaders are monitoring attendance on a weekly basis and using a range of strategies, including close working with parents, to improve it. Exclusions are also falling because leaders are providing more internal solutions, such as the nurture room. Innovations such as these are helping to manage pupils' behaviour and keep them in the school.

External support

The school benefits from the support of the Oasis multi-academy trust. The trust provides robust and frequent external monitoring, which holds leaders to account effectively. These processes complement the school's own quality assurance processes. Leaders also value the expertise and training provided by staff in other trust academies. This has helped to improve aspects of leadership and teaching.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector