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Christine Woods
Principal
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Dear Mrs Woods

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ormiston Endeavour Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 23 and 24 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk local authority.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015.

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy, in order to raise pupils' attainment, by:
 - setting work that provides the right level of challenge for pupils and builds on their prior learning
 - improving the quality of marking across all subjects so that pupils are given clear guidance on what they need to do to improve
 - making more effective use of teaching assistants to support teachers in the classroom and to support pupils' learning
 - using questioning more effectively to challenge and engage pupils, develop their speaking and listening skills, and encourage them to develop their reasoning and extend their thinking
 - ensuring that pupils develop a pride in the presentation and quality of their work.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that subject leaders all work effectively to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement in their subject
 - ensuring that the academy's policies are applied consistently throughout the academy
 - ensuring that the impact of the support provided through the pupil premium is rigorously monitored
 - conducting an external review of governance.

- Improve the behaviour and safety of pupils by:
 - ensuring that all staff consistently follow the academy's behaviour policies and challenge infringements of the code of conduct
 - further reducing avoidable absence, and stressing to pupils the importance of attendance.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 February 2016

Evidence

The inspector observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, the Chair and vice-chair of the interim executive board (IEB), Ormiston's Regional Director and Chair of the Progress Board, nominated senior and middle leaders, individual teachers and pupils, and a group of pupils.

Context

The academy implemented its new staffing structure in January. Several key staff appointments have been made since the last visit, including head of 'internal exclusion', and leadership of three of the six curriculum areas: English, mathematics (on an interim leadership basis) and the 'create' department.

Outcomes for pupils

In order to secure improved outcomes, the academy is taking suitable steps to validate the accuracy of assessments in different subjects, using external expertise to moderate teachers' judgements. The academy's system for assessment is more reliable and useful. Curriculum leaders use the information effectively because they can collate and analyse assessment information on a weekly basis, and quickly identify pupils who are in danger of falling behind. Analysis of the impact of this intervention for targeted pupils in Year 11 shows that their progress has accelerated dramatically in English and mathematics, as a result of the additional support provided. Academy assessment information indicates that GCSE results will be significantly better this year, compared with 2015.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The academy's evaluations show a marked improvement in the overall quality of teaching and learning, even in the short time since the last visit. Inspection evidence from observations of teaching and pupils' work, and from discussions with staff and pupils, confirms this improvement. Teachers have higher expectations of what pupils will achieve, their attitudes to learning and how they will behave. Staff training has focused sharply on raising standards, but has also given teachers strategies to realise these higher expectations. The implementation of each planned improvement has then been checked, for example through learning walks undertaken by senior and middle leaders. This has enabled leaders to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the new strategies, and whether teachers are applying them consistently.

The most obvious impact of the academy's work to improve teaching is in the better climate for learning in lessons, with teachers applying a more consistent approach to behaviour management. Common routines, such as taking the register and the 'meet

and greet' at the beginning of each lesson, ensure that there is a seamless start to pupils' learning, without unnecessary disruption.

Improvements reported previously have been consolidated, and work to strengthen teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. Teachers are making better use of assessment information to plan work that stretches and challenges pupils. New initiatives, such as the 15 minutes' reading for all Year 7 and Year 8 pupils at the end of each morning, have been carefully planned and implemented to ensure that they have the intended impact. The academy recognises that teaching is not yet good enough, and that weaknesses persist. However, whole-staff training has been sharply focused on the right priorities, and support for individual teachers has been well directed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The most obvious improvement since the last visit is in pupils' attitudes and behaviour, primarily in lessons but also around the academy at break, lunchtimes and at lesson changeover. Staff take more responsibility for supervising pupils, and pupils themselves are behaving with more consideration for others. Together, this is establishing a settled and positive climate for learning. Staff have recognised that collectively applying agreed rules and procedures is making life easier for everyone, because there is less disruptive behaviour to manage.

Overall, attendance continues to creep up, with a significant reduction in the levels of persistent absenteeism compared with the same period last year. Overall, the number of pupils removed from lessons has dropped markedly, as has the number of pupils subjected to an internal exclusion. Fixed-term exclusions remain high, and one pupil has been permanently excluded since the last visit. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are still more likely to be subject to behaviour sanctions than other pupils, but the picture is not quite as bleak as seen previously.

Pupils say that the academy is stricter, but recognise that sanctions are generally applied consistently and fairly. It is clear that being sent to the 'removal room' is no longer regarded by some pupils as a soft option. Importantly, parents are kept informed when their children commit misdemeanours, and this has helped them to support their children's learning and personal development. The personal guidance and support provided by the academy for individual pupils is, in most cases, highly effective. Fewer pupils are having to be repeatedly disciplined and some pupils who have previously been poorly behaved are starting to make more sensible choices about their conduct, and this is having a positive impact on their learning.

During the visit, pupils settled quickly in lessons, followed instructions and worked steadily. Too many pupils are still reluctant to express their opinions or share ideas, even when working in pairs or small groups. This reticence often stems from pupils' lack of self-confidence, either because they still have wide gaps in their knowledge

and understanding or because they are unaccustomed to active participation. Some teachers have well-established routines that help to positively build pupils' self-esteem and academic assurance. For example, in a Key Stage 4 photography lesson, pupils readily evaluated one another's work and confidently gave constructive feedback on its strengths and how it might be improved.

Lessons observed during the inspection were calm and orderly. It will take time to address the passive work habits of some pupils, and their tendency to disengage from learning, but low-level disruption has reduced considerably. Teachers deal more confidently with uncooperative behaviour.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders at all levels have responded with remarkable urgency to the findings of the last visit in December. The Principal, supported by senior leaders, pinpointed the most important priorities and planned specific actions to address each one in her 'rapid improvement plan'. In the first few weeks of the spring term, this plan has successfully focused the efforts of staff and ensured that senior and middle leaders share the same high expectations. Leaders are successfully establishing a positive climate for learning across the academy and are thus able to make necessary changes and more easily introduce new developments. This is illustrated by the introduction of the reading time for pupils in Year 7 and 8, which has started well.

The 'rapid improvement plan' has been highly effective because it is sharply focused, skilfully delivered and underpinned by good-quality training. Furthermore, the instantaneous checks provided by learning walks and department meetings have meant that developments have been quickly adjusted to maximise their impact. When, for example, the 'meet and greet' system was not working universally well on the first day, subject leaders immediately took action to clarify their expectations and make it more effective. In so doing, senior leaders and subject leaders across each of the six curriculum departments have demonstrated that rapid improvements can be accomplished when staff work together. Although staff morale dipped at the end of the autumn term, teachers are positive about the impact of developments introduced since January.

Leaders are well informed and are more confidently fulfilling their management responsibilities. They model their expectations effectively, not only in the way that they interact with pupils and engage parents, but in setting out unequivocally what excellence looks like for each of the key priorities such as the pace of learning, questioning, pupils' presentation and progress over time.

Regular reports to the Progress Board focus on 'impact statements', which helpfully assess the effectiveness of each development priority and identify 'next steps'. The system for reporting progress to the IEB is effective in holding leaders to account.

The current Progress Board report is rightly positive about the impact of the academy's recent work.

External support

The Trust is fulfilling the commitments set out in its statement of action. The academy continues to make good use of the support and guidance from the Ormiston Academy Trust and external support, such as that provided by the behaviour consultant.