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17 July 2018

Ms Eileen Hinds
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Hinds

Special measures monitoring inspection of Olive Ap Academy – Thurrock

Following my visit to your school on 3 July 2018, 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Thurrock. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2017

- Take urgent action to ensure that the school's child protection and safeguarding arrangements are effective by:
 - maintaining written records and supporting evidence that identify the actions taken to protect pupils
 - routinely checking safeguarding records to ensure that systems and procedures are effective in keeping pupils safe
 - undertaking routine checks on the quality and safety of site provision
 - ensuring that all essential site maintenance is undertaken quickly and effectively
 - referring all children who are missing from education to the local authority, within the statutory timeframe
 - ensuring that risk assessments for educational trips and visits adequately assess the potential hazards of activities for staff and pupils, giving clear guidance about how to minimise these risks.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - refining and clarifying the roles of all leaders in the school, including those in the local governing body
 - ensuring that there is effective leadership of provision for children looked after, literacy, the use of pupil premium, safeguarding arrangements, site safety and maintenance, and attendance
 - clarifying the purpose of the school with all stakeholders, including the local authority and local schools, so that there are shared expectations about admission and re-integration back into mainstream provision
 - continuing to work with the local authority on the backlog of pupils who require a long-overdue decision about their application for an education, health and care plan, and subsequent appropriate provision
 - ensuring that trust personnel, most notably at executive headteacher level, continue to support the new leadership team to embed their work and bring stability to the school
 - embedding the actions taken so far to monitor the quality of provision for the pupils in home tuition

- continuing development of the curriculum to ensure that pupils receive a tailored pathway that suits their specific needs, and that the quality of this provision is monitored effectively.
- Improve attendance and behaviour by:
 - developing new systems to urgently increase the attendance of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and those who attend alternative provision
 - rapidly increasing the provision for the social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils, as well as complex learning needs, so that they can develop better relationships and interact more effectively and, as a result, make better progress
 - embedding the new behaviour systems and closely scrutinising leaders' analysis of the effectiveness of the systems, so that interventions to support pupils to rectify their behaviour are timely and effective.
- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by:
 - developing the new assessment system so that it can be used more effectively by teachers and leaders to ensure pupils make better progress
 - urgently addressing the poor-quality indoor and outdoor provision of the primary site, so that it successfully provides the nurturing, tactile learning environment that meets the complex learning and mental health needs of pupils
 - continuing to develop the new approaches to improving the quality of teaching
 - sharing the examples of good practice in the school with all teachers.

It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers without the agreement of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

An external review of the use of the additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils (pupil premium) should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 3 July 2018

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and senior leaders. The inspector also met the chief executive of the trust. A telephone discussion was held with the chair and the vice-chair of the interim progress board, and the head of inclusion services from the local authority.

The inspector visited six lessons jointly with the deputy headteacher, across different subjects and year groups. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in and around the school and analysed a sample of pupils' work. The inspector also scrutinised the school's documentation relating to safeguarding of pupils, and reviewed the school's the single central record.

The inspector assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the second monitoring visit in March 2018. This focused on leadership and management; safeguarding; attendance and behaviour; and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Records of pupils' progress were scrutinised.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the previous headteacher has left the school and the director of academy effectiveness and standards has assumed responsibility for the post. Four members of staff have resigned from their positions. An assistant headteacher has been appointed to fill the vacancy for personal development, behaviour and welfare. A teacher for key stage 3 nurture, literacy and numeracy; a teacher for outdoor learning, physical education (PE), biology and personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE); a teacher for key stage 3 nurture and 'The Bridge'; a teacher for English, PE and outdoor learning and an area lead teacher for language, communication and the arts, who will teach dance, PSCHE and work skills have joined the school. Two of the newly appointed staff have middle leadership responsibility. Two associate tutors have been given additional responsibility for society, culture, and outdoor and service learning to bolster the support provided to pupils. The school has also appointed a teacher for English and outdoor learning, who starts in the autumn term. One person has been appointed to the interim progress board in order to fill a vacancy. One person from the newly recruited staff group has resigned and a further two existing teachers have resigned with effect from 31 August 2018, since the previous monitoring visit.

The school has continued to reach out to its partnership schools to help provide additional capacity. A design and technology teacher is on a one-day secondment each week from St Clere's School. A vice principal from Ormiston Park Academy is on a three-day secondment each week, working as a consultant, supporting personal development, behaviour and welfare. An English teacher who was on a

two-day secondment from St Clare's school until Easter has now left.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You, your senior leadership team, the trust and the interim progress board have gained momentum in taking the necessary steps to address the issues identified in the previous inspection report, in January 2017. You have brought about stability and clarity of vision for raising expectations. The school improvement plan concentrates on the actions required to move the school towards being a good school. Your school improvement plan has been implemented well, and you are using clear systems to monitor the progress you are making. You have successfully motivated pupils to share a common sense of purpose that 'all challenges can be overcome'.

The trust personnel, most notably the chief executive of the trust, have been tireless in their support of the school. The chief executive visits the school regularly and works closely with the headteacher and senior leaders. He is knowledgeable and realistic about the improvements being made, as well as the areas of weakness that still persist.

You have quite rightly concentrated on embedding the improvements seen at the last monitoring visit. You have focused on taking prompt and effective action on improving the quality of teaching, to unlock the true potential of your pupils. Leaders' support and challenge to teachers is precise and appropriate. You have implemented a programme of routine monitoring in order to judge the quality of teaching and learning. Suitable professional development is provided to staff accordingly.

In response to the previous monitoring visit, the local authority has taken appropriate steps to ensure that there are no pupils with a long-overdue decision about their application for an education, health and care plan.

You have ensured that members of staff with leadership responsibilities are increasingly effective in taking responsibility for the areas they lead. Leaders are drawing on external support and advice to ensure that assessment is accurate. A computer-based management information system is used effectively to record assessment data and to monitor the progress that pupils make. You are now able to ensure that your evaluations of the school's effectiveness are based on a secure analysis of pupils' progress.

The information that leaders provide the interim progress board is comprehensive and gives them a precise overview of progress towards the implementation of the school improvement plan. Members of the interim progress board challenge leaders strongly when they feel that progress is not sufficient. They have rightly focused their efforts on strengthening the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous monitoring visit. The interim progress board now needs to sharpen its

focus on holding you to account for the outcomes of all groups of pupils and attendance.

You have improved the referral and admission process to increase your communication with schools, parents and pupils. There is now a stronger focus on reintegrating pupils back into mainstream education. The success of this re-integration will be looked at during the next visit. Leaders and governors want to further increase this number moving forwards. All stakeholders, including the local authority and local schools, are now clear about the purpose of the school.

The school's systems and procedures for managing safeguarding are thorough. Leaders and staff are vigilant throughout the day to ensure that pupils feel safe and are secure at the school. They liaise with a suitable range of agencies in order to provide appropriate support and care for pupils. All pre-employment checks meet statutory requirements. Leaders know the risks that pupils face in their local community and beyond. Pupils are well educated on how to identify and manage these risks, including gang affiliation, weapons, grooming, e-safety, sexting and drugs misuse. One pupil commented, 'Staff care about us.' Another said: 'You learn how to keep safe in the real world.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders' evidence of the improved quality of teaching through the evaluation of lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny matches that seen by the inspector during this visit. Staff have visited other mainstream schools, allowing them to develop consistency in their expectations of pupils' standards and to share good practice about the curriculum.

Staff are working as a team to create a positive learning environment for the pupils. Good working relationships between staff and pupils are reflected in improved attitudes to learning. Pupils willingly ask and answer questions, as their confidence grows in their own ability to learn. Staff respond accordingly to ensure that any misconceptions are put right and understood.

Teachers' verbal feedback in lessons is helpful and encourages pupils to extend their ideas. Work in books is mainly well presented. The vast majority of pupils take pride in their work. Pupils now respond more readily to teachers' guidance, helping to deepen their knowledge. Scribbling in books was not seen by the inspector during this visit.

Associate tutors are being used appropriately to support learning. This was evident when they questioned pupils to deepen their understanding and encouraged pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Teachers' planning has improved and takes more account of the individual needs of the pupils in their class. However, assessment information is not used consistently

and effectively by all staff to provide stretch and challenge at the appropriate level, especially for the most able. More still needs to be done to ensure that pupils make the progress they are capable of.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

During this third monitoring visit, corridors and classrooms were calm and orderly. Staff actively supervise areas around the school. Pupils describe the adults as 'working as a team to support us' and say, 'They all take responsibility for our behaviour.' Staff are more consistent in the use of behaviour procedures and do not simply overlook the issue or try to reallocate the responsibility.

Pupils are positive about the initiatives which have been introduced to help them behave well. The use of character points is making a difference to pupils' attitudes and behaviour in school. Pupils report that they feel safe and that there is little bullying. Systems for monitoring and addressing poor behaviour and bullying are robust and pupils have confidence in them. Trends are analysed so that the school can put appropriate support in place for the pupils. There have been no permanent exclusions for the present academic year. The number of fixed-period exclusions has reduced by 55% since the introduction of the new behaviour system. This is with good reason. You are ensuring the consistent adherence of the behaviour policy by staff.

The vast majority of pupils were engaged in learning and any low-level negative behaviour was dealt with well by staff to re-engage pupils. Pupils' attitudes in lessons were mainly positive. This is because pupils know what is expected and meet those expectations most of the time. The majority of pupils value the second chance that the school has given them and wear their uniforms with pride. One pupil's words summed up the views of others when he commented that the school 'is a turnaround place and opens doors again'.

Praise cards and positive phone calls home help build confidence in the pupils and encourage them to become more motivated. Reflection and acknowledgement sessions at the end of each school day support pupils' well-being. The impact of this is that pupils leave school in an orderly manner, feeling proud of their achievements and in a happier state of mind. Pupils were eager to tell the inspector that the outdoor learning and service programmes have helped them become more confident in their resilience to challenges.

Despite the efforts of leaders, attendance remains a challenge. Pupils' sporadic attendance hinders their future life chances and career opportunities. A number of pupils had exceptionally high rates of absence prior to joining the school. You ensure that the school's system to record and monitor attendance is robust. You have invested in improving your attendance processes by employing a school-home liaison worker who is working closely with pupils and their families to raise expectations. A number of pupils have improved their attendance. However, you are

not complacent and recognise that further action needs to be taken to raise the overall attendance of pupils in all year groups.

Outcomes for pupils

The procedures for getting to know the pupils' academic and pastoral needs when they first start the school is thorough. Carefully targeted support ensures that pupils learn to become more confident, resilient and independent learners.

Pupils who talked to the inspector could not speak highly enough of how the staff have supported them in attending school for the first time in a number of months. They commented on the positive attitudes of staff in helping them prepare for their next steps. A large number of Year 11 pupils have been successful in gaining a college place. Many have previously been school refusers.

The school's assessment information indicates that pupils who are currently in Years 7 to 10 are making better progress than in the past in English and mathematics. However, the legacy of underachievement means that some gaps in their knowledge and understanding remain. There is still more to do to accelerate progress in the core subjects, which the school now has the capacity for. Some pupils, including the most able, are not consistently making the progress they are capable of as some teaching lacks stretch and challenge.

Even though attendance has improved for some pupils, low attendance prevents too many pupils from making strong progress. This, in turn, leads to their underachievement. Leaders have begun to focus on raising pupils' expectations in terms of their attendance.

External support

Leaders and staff continue to access support from their partnership schools. You have drawn upon a range of external support to help inform your actions and to improve the training and expertise available to staff. In addition to the experience of school improvement you bring, you continue to engage external consultants to advise and support leaders when required, while retaining useful links with the local authority. Both you and the interim progress board understand the importance of drawing upon a range of schools to help you in strengthening the school further, and of reducing the support when appropriate. The most recent work has been around the effectiveness of leaders in raising standards for disadvantaged pupils. The impact of the pupil premium review will be a particular focus in the next monitoring inspection.