

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 April 2022

Ryan Laker
Head of School
Oakwood Primary Academy
Magnolia Drive
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN22 0SS

Dear Mr Laker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oakwood Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 February 2022, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2020. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

The school remains in special measures, but leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the interim chief executive officer of the Aurora Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Shazia Akram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 February 2022

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2021, there have been changes to the leadership of the school. Two senior leaders have been promoted to assistant headteacher posts. One of the assistant headteachers is responsible for curriculum and teaching and learning. The other assistant headteacher is responsible for inclusion.

Two new teachers and three teaching assistants have also joined the school. Leaders have appointed an attendance officer and two administrative staff.

The interim executive board (IEB) is still in place. The interim chief executive officer (CEO) of the Aurora Academies Trust took up her post in January 2022.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders and trustees have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to address the areas of weakness identified in the previous section 5 inspection. As well as dealing with the challenges posed by the pandemic, they have resolutely kept the strong momentum of improvement going. Leaders have worked well to embed a collegiate culture at all levels. The whole team is working purposefully, positively and with vigour. This is testament to leaders' clear commitment to build a school that is successful in all areas of its work. Leaders have rigorously monitored improvements and subsequently adapted the plan of action to help steer their work effectively. This ensures that all staff feel included and play their part in driving important improvements forward.

Leaders have worked diligently to address weaknesses in the quality of education. They are determined to do the right thing by pupils and children in early years. For instance, leaders have completely redesigned the curriculum in most of the foundation subjects and in early years. They have made sure that the curriculum in subjects such as history, geography and art helps pupils and younger children build their knowledge over time. Leaders are beginning to deliver important training for subject leaders and teachers to develop curriculum expertise. Supported by the trust, leaders are also providing further training to ensure that subject leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is still an area for more development. During this inspection, some examples of effective practice were noted, particularly around how pupils' pastoral and educational needs are identified and met. However, pupils with SEND do not learn as well in the foundation subjects as they do in English and mathematics. This is because leaders have not made sure that teachers understand how to adapt the curriculum effectively. Therefore, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as their peers in these subjects. Leaders need to address this area of improvement urgently.

Leaders are continuing to build on previous improvements made in English and mathematics. Leaders have ensured that there is effective teaching in these subjects. In mathematics, teachers routinely check what pupils and children in early years know before introducing new learning. They identify and address misconceptions. In most year groups, teachers provide pupils with appropriate challenge to deepen their understanding. Teachers' subject knowledge in key stage 1 is not as strong as it is in the early years and key stage 2. Leaders are rightly addressing this.

Leaders continue to prioritise the teaching of reading. Effective and regular staff training ensures that some aspects of phonics are now taught well. While leaders have ensured that books match the school's phonics programme, staff do not make sure that the books pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds they learn in lessons. As a result, some of the weakest readers, including pupils with SEND, cannot read as well as they should. Leaders have identified this important issue and are taking the right actions in response.

Leaders have resolutely continued their work to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence. As a result, pupils' attendance continues to improve. Leaders have not allowed the challenges of the pandemic to interrupt their work. They have worked well to support pupils and their families. Parents who responded to the Ofsted survey were wholeheartedly appreciative of leaders' work in this respect. A high proportion would recommend Oakwood to other parents. One parent said, 'The best thing about the school is the head of school and his caring team, they give us everything we would want for our children'.

The executive headteacher of the trust and the IEB continue to lead decisively. The improvements noted during this monitoring inspection clearly show the developing impact of their work. The IEB has continued its rigorous scrutiny of leaders' work. This ensures that areas such as attendance, curriculum design and teaching are improving continually. Members of the IEB have also ensured that improvement plans are introduced in a thoughtful but timely way so that staff are able to manage their workload successfully.

Additional support

Leaders and staff have made the most of the support and high-quality training provided by the trust. For instance, subject leaders have worked effectively with specialists to develop the curriculum in foundation subjects and in early years. Leaders are also working with the local mathematics hub.

Leaders benefit from the efficient and timely support provided by the executive headteacher from the trust. The IEB and trustees have continued to commission external evaluations to review the school's work and provide further challenge and support for leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, members of the senior leadership team and a range of staff. I met with the chair of trustees and the chair of the IEB online to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke to pupils formally and informally, including listening to pupils read. I visited a number of lessons, accompanied by senior leaders. I also spoke to the interim CEO and the executive headteacher from the trust. I reviewed plans to improve the school, alongside your self-evaluation, curriculum design, the single central record, safeguarding documents, attendance information and records of staff training. I considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke informally to parents at the start of the second day of the monitoring inspection. I also considered 26 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.