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20 July 2021

Ryan Laker
Head of School
Oakwood Primary Academy
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Dear Mr Laker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oakwood Primary Academy

Following my visit with Alice Roberts, Her Majesty's Inspector, Lea Hannam, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and Leah Golding, OI, to your school on 29 and 30 June 2021, 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first 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 first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the 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 first monitoring inspection on 29 June 2021 and 30 June 2021

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection in March 2020, there have been changes to the leadership of the school. The head of school was appointed in an acting capacity between March 2020 and August 2020. He took up post as the substantive head of school in September 2020. An executive headteacher from within the trust is currently supporting the school.

There have been changes to governance. A new interim executive board was established in June 2020.

Three teachers and one teaching assistant were appointed in September 2020. The inclusion leader, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), took up her post in January 2021. Leaders have recently appointed two assistant headteachers and an additional phase leader who will join the school in September 2021.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders have shown great determination to address weaknesses in the quality of education. They have put in motion a series of well-considered actions, including prioritising making improvements in English and mathematics. As a result, provision in these particular subjects is now stronger. Leaders are focusing on making sure that the rest of the curriculum is just as effective.

Leaders' vision that 'reading unlocks all learning' sits at the heart of the curriculum. They have rightly introduced a systematic phonics programme and have made sure that all staff are trained to teach this well. Leaders are now in the process of providing pupils with reading books that match the sounds they are taught in lessons. This will support younger pupils and the weakest readers in key stage 2 to learn to read confidently.

In English and mathematics, staff training is supporting teachers to help pupils know and remember more. In English, pupils now read a wide range of texts which help them to learn new vocabulary and develop their writing skills. In mathematics, pupils' knowledge of number and calculation is deepening. Staff are beginning to check that pupils have learned important knowledge and technical vocabulary well before moving on to new learning. However, in early years, staff do not plan and provide children with opportunities to use their writing and mathematical knowledge. This is affecting children's readiness for their learning in key stage 1.

Weaknesses remain in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are prioritising training staff to identify and provide work that is

accurately matched to these pupils' starting points. While at a relatively early stage, the newly appointed SENCo is leading this area of the school's work effectively.

Leaders have identified that the curriculum in a number of subjects needs to be improved further. In these subjects, they are carefully considering the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. For example, leaders have revised the curriculum in history and geography so that pupils are now learning more.

Pupils' attendance has improved dramatically and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing rapidly. This is because leaders are diligently doing all they can to make sure that pupils attend school regularly. In partnership with external agencies, leaders work intensively with a small number of pupils and their families to improve individual pupils' attendance.

Parents are positive about the leadership of the school and the improvements being made. One parent summed up the views of many and wrote, 'Leaders are forward thinking, present and responsive.' Staff speak highly about the training they are receiving. They recognise that standards need to improve quickly and that at times the demands are high. However, they say that leaders are always on hand to help them manage their workload.

Additional support

Leaders benefit from timely and extensive input from the trust's chief executive officer (CEO) and the executive headteacher. Together, they provide a wide range of support, including help with managing finances, developing leadership capacity, staff recruitment and reviewing strategic plans. Their pivotal work has placed the school on a firmer footing. The interim board has wisely commissioned external evaluation to review the school's work and provide further challenge and support for leaders.

Specialists from the trust schools are working with phase leaders and the SENCo to design the curriculum in foundation subjects and early years, and they are providing staff training. Leaders have much training planned over the coming months.

Evidence

Inspectors held meetings with the head of school, the executive headteacher from the trust, other senior leaders and the multi-academy trust's CEO. They also met with the chair of the interim board (who is also a trustee) and the two other members of the interim board. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff. They spoke informally with parents on the first day of the visit.

Inspectors observed the school's work, carried out lesson visits with leaders, looked at pupils' work, scrutinised a range of documents, reviewed the school's improvement plans and curriculum planning. Inspectors took into account 53

responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 14 free-text comments. Inspectors considered 27 responses to the Ofsted's staff questionnaire.