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Mrs Clare Hoods-Truman
Oasis Academy Blakenhale Junior
Homestead Road
Garretts Green
Birmingham
West Midlands

Dear Mrs Hoods-Truman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oasis Academy Blakenhale Junior

Following my visit to your school on 3 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- teachers develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics by posing questions that require them to think more deeply
- pupils have secured their understanding in mathematics before moving on too quickly.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leaders, the regional director of the academy trust and the chair of the academy council to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. I looked at a range of documentation including the school's own self-evaluation, improvement plan and the checks made on the quality of teaching. In addition, I considered minutes of academy council meetings, academy

monitoring and evaluation reports, staff training records and information about pupils' progress and attainment. I visited each year group with you and your deputy principal, who is the leader for mathematics. I also observed some groups where pupils received additional support. I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning, particularly in mathematics. I gathered the views of a small group of parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. I also examined the single central record of staff recruitment checks.

Context

The structure of the leadership team is the same as at the last inspection. Staffing is stable. Since the last inspection, there is a new regional director of the academy trust.

Main findings

You have developed effective plans to address the areas identified at the last inspection and have high aspirations for the future of the school. You have an in-depth overview of all groups of pupils' progress and attainment, which you share with all staff and leaders. Staff use this well to identify and support pupils who have gaps in their learning and who are not making good progress. Pupils' achievement is improving as a result. You have set high targets and all staff and pupils are working hard to achieve them.

The regional director of the academy trust and the academy council have a clear oversight of the work of the school. They check the impact of the actions that staff take to address the school's weaknesses. Your leadership team, academy councillors and the academy trust work together well with a shared vision so that school is on a rapid trajectory of improvement.

Since the last inspection, you have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics. You audit teachers' subject knowledge and provide appropriate bespoke training for individuals and groups of staff. The quality of teaching has improved as teachers plan and deliver lessons that meet pupils' needs and pupils are taught well. As a result, standards are now beginning to rise.

Although attainment in mathematics was still below the national average in 2017 at the end of key stage 2, it improved closer to the national figure at the expected standard. You are confident that this will continue to improve.

Current assessment information and the work in pupils' books supports your assertion that pupils are making good progress, including at a higher standard. Progress in 2017 was well below the national average in mathematics. However, progress from the school's own tests on pupils' ability when they joined the school suggests progress was much better and more in line with the national average. In

some year groups, most notably Year 4 and Year 6, pupils are making accelerated progress.

A language-rich environment and staff using appropriate mathematical vocabulary consistently supports pupils' use of correct terminology in mathematics. You have introduced a written calculations policy that provides a clear structure and accurate methods of calculations for staff to follow. You support staff to make sure they model appropriate methods accurately. You have also helped parents to understand the new methods of calculation through providing workshops in mathematics. Consequently, there is now a much more consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Work in books shows that pupils now use methods accurately and have clear strategies for calculations. Through regular monitoring and evaluation, staff are able to address minor inconsistencies in order to embed these strategies well.

You have thought carefully about your curriculum and your approach to mathematics so that staff challenge pupils suitably. All pupils, including the most able, are challenged through reasoning, fluency and problem-solving. Teachers and teaching assistants have received training to improve their knowledge and understanding in mathematics and to support them in planning opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth. All pupils now have increased opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. They are encouraged to explain and prove their answers. Sometimes, pupils do not use the knowledge and understanding they already have well enough to help them in their learning. You recognise that, on occasion, reasoning and problem-solving activities do not challenge pupils' thinking and application of skills deeply enough. You are continuing to develop this aspect of mathematics.

You have ensured that all staff develop pupils' understanding of new concepts well in mathematics by providing a range of effective support for pupils. For example, in lessons teachers address misconceptions promptly through verbal feedback. Pupils receive extra support through teaching skills prior to a lesson or in intervention groups when needed. Flexible grouping and peer-to-peer support means that pupils can now help each other more easily. Pupils use 'marking stations', a central point in the classroom, to check their own work and learn from their mistakes. Pupils have now developed a greater ownership of their learning so that they can choose where to start their learning and when to move on. This provides greater challenge and motivation to pupils. However, on occasion, some pupils move themselves on too quickly before they have secured their understanding well enough.

Staff training is a high priority and you ensure that all staff have secure subject knowledge and understanding. You use the expertise within your school to develop the practice of others. You have developed a strong culture of reflecting on and improving teaching. You have audited the skills of teaching assistants and now utilise them to good effect in specific roles such as supporting interventions, in

pastoral roles or in supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language. You provide targeted training and support. You meet with them regularly so they are clear about the focus of teaching and they join teachers in planning and assessment time. Consequently, teaching assistants are now providing support that is more effective.

You have supported your special educational needs coordinator to develop her leadership skills. As a result, communication about pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is much improved. Classroom staff are now clear about pupils' needs and are able to provide work which is at the right level for them. Staff are supported with planning and are given effective teaching strategies to support pupils. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in almost all year groups.

External support

You use external support well to develop your staff and to check the effectiveness and impact of your improvement plans. You work closely with a local consortium of schools to develop best practice in teaching and learning. You are currently part of a pilot project with the Institute for Teaching, where outstanding practitioners (teacher educators) support other teachers to carry out research and build capacity in teaching. This is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching. You are now using your expertise to support other schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector