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Andrew Booth
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Dear Andrew Booth

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 8 and 9 March 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place June 2022.

During the inspection, Hanna Miller, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chair of the trust board, the chief executive officer (CEO) and other officers of Oasis Community Learning (OCL) the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also visited lessons, spoke to a wide range of pupils, looked at pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour. We scrutinised school documents, talked to many staff and took into account the responses to the staff and parent surveys. I have considered all of this in coming to my judgement.

Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

You have made some staffing changes. About three quarters of the current staff were at the school when it was last inspected. OCL has made a number of temporary and permanent leadership appointments to increase the school's capacity to improve. The Department for Education is seeking a new multi-academy trust to sponsor the school.

You and other leaders are making some essential improvements to the quality of education. Teachers and subject leaders, supported by a range of expertise from within the trust, have begun to adapt the curriculum to meet the specific needs of pupils at this school. Staff and pupils agree that this is beginning to have an impact. You have raised the expectations for what pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can and will achieve. You have also made sure that the support for the weakest readers in the school has been revised and renewed, which is having a very positive impact on these pupils' learning. Leaders have made sure that personal development provision, including what is taught through the curriculum, addresses some of the school's chief priorities. For example, personal, social and health education lessons have a much greater focus on why homophobia, discrimination and racism are harmful and wrong.

You correctly identify that there is more to do. Importantly, while teachers are now more aware of the specific needs of pupils with SEND and how to meet them, there is a lack of consistency about how effectively these pupils are supported. Many have significant gaps in their learning. Identification of pupils with SEND is not fully accurate. Pupils' achievement in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND varies. More generally, the approaches used in lessons by teachers are not helping pupils to retain and use what they have learned well enough. Also, how teachers check pupils' learning and use this to adapt subsequent learning lacks coherence across subjects.

Pupils' achievement in examinations at the end of Year 11 was low overall in 2022. You have set some challenging but realistic targets for 2023. The main barrier to hitting these is that too many pupils currently in Year 11 miss too much school. This picture is mirrored across other year groups. Proportions of pupils who are persistently absent are high. While the strategies you have implemented have been successful in raising attendance rates for some individual pupils, overall there has been too little improvement. You are making sure that leaders redouble their efforts in this area, so that by the time of the next monitoring inspection, there will be clear evidence of pupils' absence reducing. You have already increased the number of staff and leaders working on this vital aspect of the school's work.

Pupils and staff rightly think that behaviour has improved in lessons. You have emphasised to all at the school the need to set and meet higher expectations. This means that in some lessons, pupils work hard in a calm and respectful atmosphere. However, this is still too variable as low-level disruption remains an issue in other lessons. Antisocial behaviour, including pupils using derogatory language, remains a feature of breaktimes and transitions between lessons, but, again, there are some signs of improvement. More progress has been made with older pupils on the Minster Campus than with younger pupils at the Sheerness Campus. Internal exclusion and 're-set' provision are calm, orderly

places where pupils are engaged in meaningful work. Numbers of pupils sent to these are falling, as are the incidents of internal truancy from lessons.

Staff appreciate the support they receive through the comprehensive programme of training and coaching that leaders are providing. This incorporates a significant amount of expertise provided by OCL. Focuses are appropriate, for example how to support pupils with SEND effectively. You are making sure that subject leaders are increasingly involved in this process so that they are better placed to drive improvements. The full impact of this support on the quality of education is, however, yet to be realised. Overall, you have secured crucial commitment to improving the school from staff. The vast majority of staff are proud to work at the school, they enjoy it and they think that the school is heading in the right direction. They appreciate how you and other leaders consider their workload. They feel that now they have time to focus on the right priorities, like planning the curriculum together so it meets pupils' needs.

You, senior leaders and officers from the trust, including the CEO, maintain an accurate understanding of the progress the school is making and what the key future priorities are. Trustees rightly make sure that resources are prioritised to support the school's improvements, drawing on expertise from across the trust's schools. No one, not least you, underestimates the challenges that lie ahead. Trustees are regularly informed about developments and issues. However, their oversight of improvements in pupils' attendance could be sharper, especially given that this is a fundamental priority for the school.

Some parents are highly positive about the school. However, others are not, with issues they are concerned about including support for pupils with SEND, behaviour and bullying. You and other trust leaders know that engaging parents in productive partnerships is vital. You have taken steps to communicate with parents more effectively. Events, such as the Year 9 options evening which took place during this inspection, are better attended by parents. You have established a monthly meeting with parents to discuss developments, which the CEO also attends. While useful, you hope that more parents will join this regular meeting in the future so that you can listen to their views and act on their feedback.

Important aspects of pupils' wider development are improving. There are more opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles and influence what happens in school. For example, there is now a school council, a sixth-form leadership team, a group of sports leaders and training for 'anti-bullying ambassadors'. Extra-curricular provision is growing. You are, therefore, seeking to raise pupils' engagement and participation in the school, as well as pupils' aspirations. For example, the newly reinstated careers fair for Year 11 pupils and celebrations for international women's day took place during the inspection.

The arrangements for safeguarding are now effective. You have made sure that essential improvements have been made. Most notably, there is now a clear daily process in place to account for the whereabouts of every pupil who is absent. Pupils feel safer in school in general. Behaviour is improving and so there are fewer incidents that make them feel

threatened or at risk. Pupils are beginning to feel more confident about reporting issues to staff and that these will be addressed appropriately. The right help is put into place for vulnerable pupils because issues are swiftly identified and acted on. There are some aspects that leaders could sharpen up. For example, at times the communication between the two campuses about pupils' attendance could be tighter.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Oasis Community Learning multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
His Majesty's Inspector