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11 July 2016

Mrs G Douglas  
Interim Headteacher  
Oaklands Park School  
John Nash Drive  
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Devon  
EX7 9SF

Dear Mrs Douglas

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oaklands Park School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 June 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 in February 2016.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- refine the school's development plan by setting out targets and implementing actions that are focused on pupils' progress so that leaders and governors can check more precisely what is working well and why
- raise the aspirations of teachers and pupils so that pupils make the very best progress of which they are capable, especially in English and mathematics.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Together, we visited classrooms to observe learning and to look at pupils' work. I met with pupils to seek their views about the school

and spoke to pupils as I visited classrooms. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's records of the outcomes of monitoring activities undertaken by leaders. In addition, school development plans were evaluated.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection the school has been redesignated and is now a residential special school. At the time of this monitoring visit the executive headteacher was absent from school. A new head of school has been appointed as part of the school's restructuring programme.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection the executive headteacher has taken firm action to tackle the areas identified as requiring improvement. As the interim headteacher, you are continuing to drive forward her plans. Additionally, the newly appointed head of school is already working closely with the school and has quickly acquired a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

You know the school extremely well, and are working effectively with staff and governors to ensure the pace of improvement does not stall. You review the quality of teachers' work through regularly visiting lessons, scrutinising pupils' work and analysing progress information. As a result, you have a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. You are swiftly tackling any underperformance of teaching through focused support and challenge, rigorously holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement. Pupils are making better progress as a result of these improvements. However, leaders agree that teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve could be even higher, especially in mathematics and English.

Leaders have taken a number of effective steps to focus attention on raising pupils' achievement at the school. They have put in place robust systems for tracking and monitoring what pupils can and cannot do. This provides teachers with accurate information to allow them to plan work which precisely meets the needs of pupils. For example, through careful checking, leaders identified that pupils were not achieving well enough in number calculations in mathematics. Swift and decisive action was taken to remedy this, resulting in much-improved rates of progress. Similarly, following leaders' interventions, staff now carefully check pupils' understanding and encourage their participation during lessons through observation and skilful questioning; their responses are used well, with teaching adapted accordingly. These strategies are helping to increase pupils' self-esteem as well as engaging them more fully in their learning. The introduction of 'learning journey' folders, which provide pupils with easy access to their work, is having a significant impact. Older pupils told me how these are 'so much more efficient' and help them to see the progress they are making. Teachers agree that the folders are motivating pupils to make better progress.

The role of subject leaders has been enhanced so that they can be more involved in helping pupils to achieve the very best outcomes. They have received coaching so that they can monitor and evaluate pupils' progress with greater precision and accuracy. The introduction of 'spot assessments' is providing subject leaders with timely information of what pupils can and cannot do in their subjects. This information is then being used effectively to adapt planning.

These important improvements notwithstanding, development plans at school and subject level insufficiently identify strategies and targets linked to pupils' progress so that leaders and governors can check precisely what is working well and why.

Practices to safeguard pupils have been reviewed, modified and improved, accompanied by appropriate training. For example, procedures for the handover of pupils at the start and end of each day have been tightened. All pupils are now escorted to their class on their arrival. The records the school keeps on safeguarding and behaviour have been strengthened significantly since the inspection. Leaders monitor carefully all records relating to safeguarding and behaviour incidents. Consequently, these systems are reducing the risk to pupils. The school continues to work effectively with other agencies to keep pupils safe.

The governing body, which at the time of the inspection had only recently been established following the federation with Ratcliffe School, is strong. Governors already have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are firmly holding leaders to account for teachers' performance and pupils' outcomes through their own monitoring activities.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school is using a local authority improvement programme to drive up standards. Specifically, the school improvement officer has been working alongside leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to raise teachers' aspirations of what pupils can achieve.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**