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1 March 2013

Mr Tomas Smith  
Principal  
Skegness Junior Academy  
Pelham Road  
Skegness  
PE25 2QX

Dear Mr Smith

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Skegness Junior Academy**

Following my visit with David Carter, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 27–28 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, other staff, groups of pupils, spoke to parents and carers and met with two Executive Principals of the Academy Trust.

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

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

### **Context**

The academy opened in September 2012 and is part of the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust group of academies. There are 315 pupils on roll at the academy. The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very few are from other White or Asian backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional

language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and support through additional government funding (pupil premium) is above average.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Pupils begin at the Skegness Junior Academy with attainment which is below that normally expected for their age. The evidence collected by academy leaders about the progress pupils have made since the academy opened in September 2012 indicates that progress has accelerated for most pupils. For many, it indicates that progress has been good and, for some, it has been outstanding. This is because the quality of teaching has improved. Teachers are more often challenging pupils to do their best. Inspectors found that the work in pupils' books confirms that pupils have made good progress overall. It also confirms that a small amount of variation remains. Where teaching requires improvement, pupils' progress is slower.

Pupils' attainment is improving. In the youngest year groups, it is close to reaching the levels expected. In other year groups, the gap is wider, but evidence collected by the academy indicates that it is closing more quickly. Therefore, the proportion of pupils on track to reach their more challenging targets has grown. Because academy leaders keep a careful check on how well pupils are doing, they are well aware of the few places where gaps may not be closing quite so quickly and have swiftly put extra support in place to make sure that no pupils get left behind.

Different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those learning to speak English as an additional language are making good progress. This is because of the close monitoring of their progress and the wide range of extra and more accurately targeted support they receive. The academy checks carefully that pupils eligible for pupil premium also receive well-chosen support. This ensures that any gaps in learning for these pupils are closing swiftly. This funding has helped to provide an extra teacher, parent support advisor and additional teaching resources.

Pupils are making better progress in reading and writing because the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) has improved. Better resources to support pupils to use these skills independently have also been purchased. Academy leaders are well aware that there is still more to do to make sure that every pupil rapidly acquires the basic skills they need to become fluent readers and writers. Further partnership work is planned with the associated academy infant school to make sure that this happens quickly.

The use of practical equipment to reinforce learning and more opportunities to solve interesting problems are paying dividends for pupils' progress in mathematics. Pupils are developing more confidence to use their mathematical skills when they are

working independently, and to use them in other subjects. Importantly, they are developing their ambition and ability to be successful learners.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching meets the majority of pupils' needs well. It ensures that pupils, whatever their background, circumstances and ability make good progress. During the inspection, no inadequate teaching was seen and the majority of lessons observed was good or better. A small minority of teaching requires improvement.

Teachers give clear explanations of what they expect pupils to learn in lessons. They plan engaging topics which pupils enjoy, and use resources which support learning well. The learning environment has been improved, with displays which provide valuable prompts and support pupils when they are working independently in lessons. All teachers plan conscientiously for the different levels of ability in their class. In the best lessons, this is supplemented with probing questions. These questions challenge pupils to think and work even harder. They are used to ensure that the teacher is constantly aware of who is finding the work too hard or too easy so that teachers can address pupils' misconceptions and change their plans on the spot if necessary. In lessons which require improvement, this is not always the case.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics are experts in their field, having previously worked for the local authority as models of best practice. They have had a significant impact on the quality of teaching in these subjects. However, academy leaders are aware that, in a very few instances, subject knowledge requires further improvement in order for teaching to always have a good impact on the learning of all ability groups.

Teaching assistants are well prepared and usually add significantly to the learning of the individuals and groups of pupils they support within and outside lessons.

Some excellent examples of written feedback were seen which help pupils to improve their work. Occasionally this written feedback does not help pupils to identify the next steps for their learning or teachers do not make sure that pupils address the points they have been given. The ability of pupils to be able to evaluate their own success is in its early stages. Teachers are still developing the skills pupils need for them to be able to do this successfully. Pupils say that the targets they are given help them to improve their work. They know their targets well for reading and writing, but not always quite as well for mathematics.

Good opportunities are provided to ensure the effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in an assembly, pupils were given the opportunity to reflect on their place in the world and what they had to be grateful for. Pupils collaborate well and are respectful of one another in lessons. They develop a good sense of right and wrong. Everyone was seen to be

included well in all the activities on offer in the academy, regardless of their background and circumstances.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning in the large majority of lessons. This is due to the positive ethos generated by teachers and adults, and a clear focus on pupils' learning. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. For example, pupils enter assembly in silence, and movement around the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are clear about the behaviour code and speak maturely about the consequences of making 'wrong choices'. The house system and team points awarded motivate pupils well to work hard and behave well. Parent support advisor has been increased. Recorded incidents of unacceptable behaviour have fallen.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say that instances of bullying in all its forms are rare and are always dealt with swiftly and effectively by adults. Pupils are taught through the curriculum how to deal with any instances of bullying and other ways that they can keep themselves safe and healthy. These views are supported by those of parents and carers expressed in response to a recent survey carried out by academy leaders.

The academy has rigorous systems in place for monitoring the attendance of individuals and groups of pupils. Where required, they intervene through contacting parents. A pastoral support adviser has been appointed to work closely with parents to support pupils getting to school where difficulties arise. Attendance has improved to be broadly average. Academy leaders accept that there is an issue with punctuality. Some pupils were observed by inspectors to be coming to school after their peers have arrived.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

Leadership of the academy has been strengthened. The establishment of the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust vision and ethos has raised expectations that all pupils can achieve highly. The responsibilities are clearly set out for the part that leaders at all levels must play to achieve this. Rigour has been brought to the systems for checking on the effectiveness of everyone's work and to the ways in which everyone is held accountable for pupils' success.

The introduction of the wider academy trust systems and their personnel for managing finances, health and safety, human resources and safeguarding have freed leaders to focus all of their time on school improvement. All senior leaders, including the Executive Principal, who is the link between the academy and the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust, are involved first hand in checking on the effectiveness of the academy's work. At the centre of their work are the checks on how well pupils are making progress, the standards they are reaching and making sure that everything is done to improve teaching as quickly as possible. Leaders

know the strengths and areas for improvement well, and plans for improvement are clear and focused on the correct areas.

A key feature underpinning improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and, consequently, to improving pupils' achievement, has been the astute appointment of English and mathematics subject leaders who are specialists in their field. Teachers say that they feel well supported by the leadership team to improve their practice. The vice principal, who is also the assessment leader and leader for teaching and learning, collects a wide range of important information to help keep track of how well everyone is doing. This information supports teachers' ability to plan to meet the needs of pupils and to make sure that resources are targeted on closing as swiftly as possible any gaps in learning that have been identified.

Relationships with associated academies are used effectively to introduce interest, breadth and enjoyment to the curriculum. For example, colleagues come in from the senior academy to teach archery and a modern foreign language. Joint working with the associated infant academy to promote better transition and to improve achievement is in its early stages.

Relationships with parents are strengthening, particularly through the work of the parent support advisor. Many parents spoken to said they had noticed improvements since September, for example in pupils' behaviour and in the rate at which their children are learning. Parents and carers who may have found it more difficult to engage with their child's school are supported through the 'happy families' programme, which encourages them to come into school and work alongside their child. This enables the parent support advisor to establish effective relationships with parents, carers and with pupils.

### **External support**

Appropriate support has been offered by the Executive Principal and other senior leaders from the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust. This has enabled the academy to get off to a smooth start. The Principal of the academy has appreciated the support of the trust in many important areas. These include helping to establish a strong ethos, raising the expectations of staff, parents, carers and pupils, introducing rigour to systems for monitoring and evaluation and for holding staff to account. The Trust's support with financial management and the management of human resources has enabled leaders within the academy itself to focus solely and successfully on raising pupils' attainment.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that written feedback to pupils makes the next steps of their learning clear and that pupils are given the opportunity to respond.

- Ensure teachers plan work which challenges all pupils, make regular checks for misconceptions, and change their plans on the spot if necessary.
- Encourage pupils, parents and carers of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chief Executive of the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc Chief Executive of the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust  
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