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Mr Keith Douglas  
Executive headteacher  
Falconer School  
Falconer Road  
Bushey  
Hertfordshire  
WD23 3AT

Dear Mr Douglas

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Falconer School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 May 2013, 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 which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with the executive headteacher, the four senior leaders, two members of the governing body and the school effectiveness adviser for secondary schools from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action, which incorporates the school's action plan, was evaluated.

### **Context**

The headteacher and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body have left the school. Since April, the headteacher of Bushey Meads School has led Falconer School as the executive headteacher, as well as leading his own school. Bushey Meads School, together with Little Reddings Primary School, form the Bushey St James Trust and the possibility of Falconer School joining the trust may be considered in

the future. The governing body plan to appoint a new Chair and Vice-Chair at their next meeting. Two additional governors have been appointed by the local authority.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Following the February inspection, the local authority moved swiftly to challenge senior leaders and governors, and then to secure leadership and governance for the foreseeable future. Replacing the governing body with an interim executive board was considered but rejected for the time being. Although they know that the school's long-term future and leadership need to be decided fairly soon, the executive headteacher, the governing body and the local authority are very clear that this will not detract from the main priority of rapidly improving the quality of teaching and students' learning.

At the end of April, the school effectiveness adviser and the executive headteacher held a meeting for parents and carers about the inspection report, the local authority's response and the changes in leadership. Approximately 50 parents and carers attended the meeting. Parents' and carers' views and concerns were recorded, and will be taken into account in the action plans. Further meetings will be held with parents and carers each term.

The local authority's statement of action sensibly includes the actions that will be taken by advisers, staff, senior leaders and governors. Arrangements for checking that actions take place are clearly set out. Targets are challenging and appropriately linked to students' academic progress. The part that the governing body plays in checking each part of the plan is not yet clear enough. Similarly, there is not enough mention of how the views of students and their parents and carers on how well things are moving forward will be gathered and considered. The action plan is designed to take the school out of special measures around spring 2014. This is an ambitious aim but measurements and milestones are suitably set to keep everyone on track towards that date. The school action group is about to hold its first meeting to check how well the actions of staff, leaders and governors are starting to make a difference to students' academic progress and social development.

The senior leadership team has expanded to include leaders for assessment and the Key Stage 4 curriculum. This sensibly provides a bigger team to share the load and responsibility for the most important things that need to improve. The executive headteacher provides clear guidance to senior leaders, who are appreciative of the new opportunities available to them, to take on greater responsibility for school improvement and to learn from the good practice in local secondary schools. They also welcome the considerable amount of support already provided by local authority advisers for English, mathematics, science and assessment. As a result of the actions

taken so far, students' targets have been upgraded to provide appropriate challenge, teachers plan lessons according to an agreed format, a revision of the curriculum is underway and staff performance is managed differently. Actions to address the national minimum standards (NMS) for the boarding accommodation not met at the February inspection include the recent appointment of an independent listener and training planned for next term.

Senior leaders and governors are quite rightly focusing their work on improving students' progress. They know that the quality of teaching, assessment and the curriculum need to improve to make sure that students have the opportunity to achieve at least as well as their counterparts in good mainstream secondary schools. Although focusing on these things, senior leaders and governors are mindful of the need also to make sure that, when expecting more of students' learning and attitudes to work, there is no deterioration in students' social behaviour. The development of staff practice in meeting students' special educational needs does not have a high enough profile within the senior leadership team to make sure that a good understanding of behaviour and autism influences improvements in teaching and the curriculum.

The governing body have not yet made some important decisions. The election of a new Chair and Vice-Chair has not yet taken place and the way that committees will hold leaders to account for the quality of their work is not yet established. The local authority is to support the governing body in reviewing their roles and responsibilities in the near future.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**