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10 October 2013

Mr David Williams  
Principal  
Ash Hill Academy  
Hatfield  
Doncaster  
DN7 6JH

Dear Mr Williams

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ash Hill Academy, Doncaster**

Following my visit to your school on 7 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- consolidate and embed the issues that have been implemented since the previous inspection
- strengthen the academy development plan by including measurable small steps to show if all groups, but especially for boys and students known to be eligible for free school meals, are making appropriate progress so that gaps close, including for students in the sixth-form
- making sure that there is a consistent approach to improvement from all middle leaders.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, four members of the Education Advisory Board, including the Chair. A meeting was also held with the Academy Improvement Officer from Schools Partnership Academies Trust (SPTA) who are the sponsors of the academy. Various documents were evaluated including the most recent improvement plan and the 2013 results at GCSE and A Level.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the Vice- Principal has retired.

## **Main findings**

The academy is in the process of moving forward and you recognise that for some middle leaders in particular, there is not yet a consistent and speedy response to the issues identified in the previous inspection. Nevertheless, systems are in place to help improve student performance and the quality of teaching within the academy. A training programme is in place, but there are still obstacles to be overcome so that the overall quality of teaching is at least good overall. As more leaders take the lead, this is helping you to gain a more strategic view of how to improve and to work with members of the Education Advisory Board and the sponsor.

Improving students' levels of literacy is a challenge and considerable work is being done to improve them. Reading and spelling take place regularly and extended writing is being trialled in mathematics and science. At present it is too early to see if this work is making a difference.

The academy development plan needs to be strengthened so that leaders at all levels can measure the impact of initiatives and whether these are making a difference to the outcomes of all students. At present, the attainment and progress gaps between different groups is wide and these need to narrow, including for students in the sixth form. It is pleasing to note that so far this year, attendance is improved and that new systems have the potential to make a difference, but it still early days.

I 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 improvement officer from SPTA works regularly at the academy and has a clear understanding of the challenges faced. Staff visit other academies within the SPTA group and this is enabling them to observe practice elsewhere and apply ideas within their own classrooms.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Education Advisory Board and the Chief Executive Officer of the SPTA.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**