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16 November 2013

Ms K Thackray  
Interim Headteacher  
Bridgemary Academy  
Wych Lane  
Gosport  
PO13 0JN

Dear Ms Thackray

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Bridgemary Academy**

Following my visit to your academy with Mary Massey, Additional inspector, on 15 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

The academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority for Hampshire and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon  
**Additional inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013**

- Improve teaching, so that all groups of students make good or better progress in all subjects by:
  - setting work that engages and challenges students of all abilities
  - ensuring that students are given written feedback that raises aspirations and demands high-quality responses to improve standards
  - ensuring that all work is completed to a sufficiently high standard and that students are given time in lessons to make improvements
  - setting homework that is of a high quality and ensuring that this is completed to a good standard.
  
- Raise achievement in science so that standards are at least in line with national averages for GCSE examinations and all students make good, or better, progress in lessons.
  
- Improve levels of attendance and punctuality within all year groups by continuing to focus on the needs of students who are persistently absent and are regularly late to school.
  
- Ensure that school leaders, including governors, promote further improvements in teaching through the rigorous application of policies and procedures.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 November 2013**

### **Evidence**

The inspectors met with the interim headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the heads of the mathematics and science departments, the attendance officer, the student support manager, a representative from the sponsor and two members of the governing body. The inspectors observed 13 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with members of the leadership team. In lessons, inspectors talked to students and viewed their work. Inspectors scrutinised documentation to show evidence of the work taken to improve standards. These included the latest academy development plans, attendance figures and information about the progress students are making. The single central record was checked.

### **Context**

Since the first monitoring inspection there have been considerable changes in staffing. An interim headteacher took up her post on 4 November 2013. Ten teachers left the academy in August 2013 and in September 2013 five newly qualified teachers, two teachers who had trained overseas, and one unqualified teacher joined the staff. Two experienced teachers also joined the academy. A new head of English has recently taken up her role and a member of the senior leadership team has taken overall responsibility for mathematics. In September the technology and art departments combined under one leader and a new head of humanities post has been created.

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

In the very short time in which the interim headteacher has been in post she has acted very rapidly to refocus the academy onto the importance of improving the quality of teaching and learning. She has continued the work which she had begun when acting as a consultant to the academy. She has quickly gained the confidence of the staff and pupils, who now have a renewed sense of purpose and direction. She has simplified the academy systems to aid communication and has made her expectations very clear. She has taken active steps to provide more time to enable teachers to concentrate upon improving their teaching.

GCSE results in 2013 were below those of 2012. The proportion of students gaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics was below the floor targets (the government's expectations of the attainment of students), as was also the proportion making reasonable progress in English and mathematics. The gap in achievement between those students in receipt of the pupil premium (funding allocated to provide extra support for students who are in receipt of free school meals, are in care or come from service families) and others was wider than in 2013.

As a result of almost a quarter of the teaching staff being new at the beginning of this academic year, the senior leadership team has had to direct its energy towards supporting new teachers, especially those who are newly qualified or who are not familiar with the English educational system. The senior leadership team is very well aware that there is now a need to improve the quality of teaching and learning rapidly.

The overall leadership of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is being provided by senior leaders. They are mentoring and supporting inexperienced middle leaders in mathematics and science and two assistant headteachers will provide the same support for English from January 2014. Middle leadership in other subjects is more secure. The senior leadership team is holding these leaders to account tightly for the progress in their departments.

The judgements by senior leaders on the quality of teaching seen in the lessons observed on the monitoring visit agreed with those of the inspectors. They are coaching teachers on how to improve the learning through regular visits to lessons and training, which is increasingly personalised. However, the changes in strategic leadership, simplified systems and improved stability of staffing are all very recent and have not yet had sufficient time to make a positive impact on achievement or the quality of teaching across the school.

The governors have received regular reports on the changes in the academy. Until very recently the information which they had been given was too complex and they have not asked challenging enough questions. They have not held the academy to account sufficiently tightly. They now have more concise information which is more easily understood. However, there has not yet been a full meeting of the governing body since the interim headteacher was appointed. The governors have a lack of clarity in their relationship with the sponsors over the governors' role in holding the academy to account.

### **Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The strong focus on improving behaviour is having an effect. Poor behaviour is not tolerated, acted upon quickly and the students are aware that they have a right to learn without interruptions. In the majority of lessons observed during the monitoring inspection, students were well behaved, keen to learn and interested in the work. The rate of fixed-term exclusions has also reduced considerably, although the proportion of students with special educational needs who are excluded is higher than that of those with no special educational needs.
- Attendance has improved significantly and is now near national averages. The percentage of students who are persistently absent has halved when compared with the same period last year. The academy student support manager and her team vigorously follow up any absence and work with

families to ensure students attend regularly. Students are rewarded for high levels of attendance. Punctuality has also improved, both at the beginning of the academy day and between lessons. The academy has a comprehensive tracking system so that any student who is late is identified quickly and appropriate action taken. Parents and carers are informed about lack of punctuality, but equally rewards are given to those students who are always on time. These are valued by the students.

- Teachers' questioning skills in lessons have improved and some teachers use targeted questions to deepen knowledge or to follow up answers where detail is lacking. Training on how to ask effective questions has clearly had a positive impact. This was very evident in a science lesson on how plants grow, in which the teacher probed to ensure understanding of the concept being studied.
- The academy has introduced a revised marking policy which is being applied consistently across all year groups. Marking of students' work is generally regular and gives guidance on how students can improve their work. However, the marking policy is not yet fully embedded. Students do not always follow up the work which has been corrected and are not always given time to do so.
- The complete reorganisation of the science curriculum has ensured that most students will be entered for GCSE examinations. Some students are studying three science subjects and the courses on offer are now more appropriately matched to their needs and abilities. The quality of teaching in the science department is being tightly monitored although it is not yet good.

### **Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The quality of teaching and learning remains very weak and fragile with not enough that is good and too much that is inadequate. In some lessons, the pace is not fast enough so that learning is too slow or students become restless and progress wanes. Some lessons take too long to start with time being wasted on routine administration. In one lesson seen, far too long was spent on listening to the words in a piece of music designed to stimulate thinking and very little written work was done.
- The planning of lessons is poor. Many plans do not take the needs of individual students into account, especially those who are in receipt of the pupil premium or have special educational needs. Even when they do so, the plans do not always identify clearly enough how these students will be supported in their learning. At times, the planning does not contain activities which logically lead students from one level of thinking to another. This slows students' progress. The academy has just begun to introduce a new form of planning, but this has not yet had enough time to make a positive impact.

- In many lessons not enough is demanded of students. They are set work which they can either complete very quickly or which does not challenge them sufficiently. There is also sometimes a mismatch between the objective which the teachers say the lesson is designed to meet and the work set. As a result the progress of the students is not fast enough.
- Work is not always well matched to the abilities of the students. Some need much more support to understand how to complete the tasks which they are being set. Teachers do not always show them an example of how to begin an activity or provide supporting materials which will guide them through the task. This was particularly evident in lower ability sets.
- Students' literacy skills are very weak and there is a lack of consistency in the approach to improving them. Poor literacy is not routinely challenged in the subjects in the academy. Incorrect grammar, spelling and punctuation are not always followed up. Too much work is not completed in full sentences. There is often a lack of resources in classrooms such as word banks or visual displays to help students with literacy.
- The presentation of students' work is poor. Too much is completed in pencil and drawings are often done in pen. Work is sometimes not headed correctly or unfinished and much is very untidy. Some students lack pride in their work.

### **External support**

The Kemnal Academies Trust has continued to work with the academy and to provide support. Teachers from Bridgemaury Academy have visited other academies within the chain to observe good practice. The sponsor has monitored the progress of the academy against the action plan and is aware of the slow progress made so far. The sponsor have commissioned reports on progress across the academy from external consultants and have provided an experienced interim headteacher from their own staff.