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18 December 2013

Phil Hearne  
Executive Principal  
The Crest Girls' Academy  
Crest Road  
Neasden  
London  
NW2 7SN

Dear Mr Hearne,

### **Serious Weaknesses monitoring inspection of The Crest Girls' Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 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 serious weaknesses following the inspection which took place in June 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you and the Principal Education Adviser from E-ACT, the academy sponsor. A telephone conversation was held with the Vice-Chair of Governing Body and a written submission was accepted from the Chair of the Governing Body. The local sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement action plan were evaluated and minutes of the local governing board were scrutinised.

### **Context**

At the end of the current school term, two teachers, one of mathematics and the other of information and communication technology, are due to leave. The positions have both been filled. Following the section 5 inspection, the girls' academy, as part of The Crest Academies, lost 57 teachers. The governing body and E-ACT are

currently working with the Department for Education towards Crest Boys' and Girls' Academies becoming a single academy by September 2014. Consultation about the process has started and is due to end in March 2014. A new building is on schedule for completion in 2014. A programme to improve teaching with the aid of an educational organisation has been brokered recently by the Principal Education Adviser from E-ACT.

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

You have continued to build on the planned changes noted in the section 5 report. This includes your commitment and that of the governing body to bring about rapid improvement. You have used a range of initiatives to develop the quality of teaching; most notably, the programme to improve teaching and one-to-one support is reportedly leading to better teaching. However, as you have indicated, a minority of teaching is not yet consistently good. You are increasingly developing good practice across the academies by using the best practitioners to demonstrate the high-quality teaching required. As part of the drive for improving students' achievement, you have identified underperforming academic subjects and taken decisive action to deal with weaknesses in teaching. First, consultancy work is being used strategically. The consultant mathematician, as a role model, is having a positive impact on girls' attitude towards the subject. Recent data show that girls are making much better progress. Second, you report that the partnership work with Highgate School is contributing to strengthening teaching in science. Partnership work with the local authority has also been used to validate teaching in the sixth form. Third, you have restructured some departments, including the humanities and the sixth form, to increase their capacity and improve outcomes.

Our discussion about the sixth form indicates that the new staffing structure has provided clarity about the vision for improving outcomes, particularly in the AS-level examinations. You report that expectations have been raised. As a result, transition to the sixth form and the quality of information, guidance and support for students have improved. The Principal Education Adviser has worked well with you to elicit students' views about provision in the sixth form. Consultation with sixth form students suggests they believe that they have a voice and their learning needs are being met.

You and other senior leaders have increased accountability by collecting data every six weeks to check on students' progress. The tracking information is also used for performance management of staff. It is also a method of tackling underachievement to question staff at all levels about girls' performance. You are working with a team of governors which has knowledge and experience of education, law and finance. This body is vigilant; minutes of meetings, and my discussions with them indicate

that they know the academy very well. For example, they use the red, amber or green (RAG) rating, data collection and the Raising Achievement Board to challenge senior leaders about students' progress. However, minutes do not always record how well they are questioning you and other leaders about the academy's progress.

The Principal Education Adviser provides you with a good range of advisory support. However, the level of support required from the sponsor during the new build and merger of the academies is not always evident.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**