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17 February 2014

Mrs C Heron  
St Aldhelm's Academy  
Herbert Avenue  
Poole  
BH12 4HS

Dear Mrs Heron

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Aldhelm's Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 14 February 2014, 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 Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the academy.

### **Evidence**

The inspector considered a range of evidence including:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion with pupils
- scrutiny of documentary evidence
- discussions with leaders and staff.

Having evaluated all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time that behaviour and safety requires improvement.

## **Context**

St Aldhelm's Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportions of pupils that are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those that speak English as an additional language are lower than are found in other schools. A higher-than-average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students that are supported at school action and school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs are well above average. More students join or leave the school, other than at the usual times, than is typical. Staffing at the school is stable.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour requires improvement because some teachers are accepting of poor behaviour in lessons, which disrupts learning. These teachers do not follow the academy's behaviour policy consistently and often ignore students' casual use of foul language. Students' absence and persistent absence rates remain high.

Senior leaders have taken determined action since the previous inspection to improve the standard of behaviour. In September 2013, the academy appointed a 'behaviour for learning' coordinator to work alongside some teachers to improve their skills in managing behaviour. The co-ordinator has implemented new policies and procedures for students which reward positive behaviour and have clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour. As a result, the standard of behaviour has improved markedly, since the academy opened. This is also evident in the numbers of exclusions, which are reducing.

The beginning and end of the academy day are well managed. Staff are on duty and model positive behaviour and attitudes by greeting the students politely. In their tutor bases, students and adults talked to each other in a calm and respectful manner. Students were observed entering a whole school assembly during the inspection. Clear routines and high expectations have been established: Students entered the hall in silence. During the assembly, a student read from the Bible and, at the end, the rest of the students showed their appreciation by applauding spontaneously.

In most lessons, relationships between students and teachers are strong. Teachers treat students with respect and courtesy and use praise appropriately to encourage positive attitudes to learning. For example, in a geography lesson, the teacher took the opportunity to recognise a student who had followed instructions, saying, 'Well done. You have followed my instruction quickly.' This then resulted in others doing likewise. However, in too many lessons, teachers do not follow the academy's behaviour policy so learning is disrupted. During the inspection, there were occasions during lessons when students moved out of their seats without permission to chat to others. Some students stopped working to brush their hair. Teachers did not challenge this behaviour. The same students were observed behaving impeccably in other lessons with different teachers. Students echoed these

observations by indicating that their behaviour varied according to who their teacher was. Some teachers also ignored the use of foul language during lessons.

The academy is a calm place during break and lunch times. Staff are visible and interact well with students. Students queue sensibly in the canteen and staff model high expectations by queuing alongside students. The environment is well cared for and minimal litter is visible. At the end of social times, students leave promptly and move purposely towards their lessons arriving on time.

Leaders are relentless in their pursuit of improving behaviour. They maintain detailed records and use these to analyse trends and patterns that may emerge. Extra staff, some of whom are ex-students, are employed to mentor students with identified behaviour and attendance concerns. These staff also liaise closely with the families of these students. Attendance, whilst improving, is still low.

Students are typically polite and courteous around the academy and they feel safe. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe. They indicate that bullying is not commonplace and most feel the academy would deal with any concerns quickly.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure all staff consistently apply school policies and procedures for managing behaviour to reduce low-level disruption.
- Ensure all staff challenge the casual use of inappropriate language to communicate and maintain high expectations of students' behaviour.
- Continue to work closely with students and their families to improve attendance.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Poole, the Secretary of State for Education, the Education Funding Agency, and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**