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25 April 2014

Mrs K Godsall  
The Interim Principal  
The New Forest Academy  
Long Lane  
Southampton  
SO45 2PA

Dear Mrs Godsall

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The New Forest Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 24 April 2014, 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

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

### **Evidence**

During this inspection I met with you, the Executive Principal who is also a representative of the sponsor Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), other senior staff, and the Chair and the Vice Chair of the new Management Board. I checked aspects of safeguarding, and we briefly visited several classrooms around the academy. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action planning were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to the leadership of the academy. The Principal has left and you have very recently taken up post as interim Principal until August, while the sponsors appoint a substantive Principal. An Executive Principal, who is also an AET representative, has recently been appointed. Two Vice Principals have left and an Assistant Vice Principal is now an acting Vice

Principal. An additional interim Vice Principal has been seconded from another school for the summer term. The governing body has been dissolved and replaced with a management board, chaired by AET's Director of Challenge and Intervention.

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

Since your arrival three weeks ago, you have brought considerable energy, vigour and vision to beginning the process of transforming this academy. You are determined that students' needs will be better served and that the students will enjoy making much better progress from now on. This message has been well received by staff, students and parents.

You have quite rightly targeted the quality of learning and teaching as the priority, and you have used your skills and experience as an advanced skills teacher to very good effect. Clear descriptions of what constitutes good teaching that can promote secure and rapid learning have been established through a number of mini-training sessions each week, and longer training sessions. Some students have already had the opportunity to contribute usefully to this work. Many staff and students are responding positively to the new challenges and several of the lessons we visited were modelling this new practice successfully.

You maintain a strong presence around the academy and take every opportunity to speak with students and reinforce your vision. Students are happy to have this much stronger and clearer leadership and show it in a number of ways, for example by wearing their uniform smartly, being more punctual to lessons, and responding to my questions about their work and their views of the changes underway in the academy thoughtfully and confidently.

Some of the issues identified at the previous inspection have been tackled already. The most urgent were concerning safeguarding. Procedures around checking the backgrounds of all staff, and other adults who work closely with students, are now sound, the child protection policy has been updated and better training materials for staff have been obtained from other AET academies. You have also begun to tackle several other problems assertively, including introducing a homework timetable, and systems to monitor that it is being followed by all staff, and checking that marking is being done, and it can support better progress. You refer to the immediate implementation of such basic provision as your 'non-negotiables', but you also wisely acknowledge the importance of involving staff and students in how policies and practices will develop and evolve in the academy.

Many middle leaders are responding positively to your leadership, showing commitment to improve the previously very low rates of progress of students.

Several are able to use the support for their leadership and management skills, provided by AET over the last year, in responding to your vision of good teaching and learning. The leadership of provision for students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs has previously been an area of concern, but improvements have been brought about with the support of AET and the academy's staff, and this department is now in a position where it can function adequately and move forward.

The new management board has its first meeting soon. It consists of experienced and committed people who have the best interests of the academy at heart. It is particularly useful to have local primary headteachers involved. There are already good plans to ensure that each member has the chance to involve themselves closely with the delivery of a particular area for improvement from the previous inspection, working closely with designated staff on the senior team, and to also acquire a broad understanding of the academy's overall improvement strategy. One of its first tasks will be to review the place of the sixth form in the academy.

Given your very recent arrival, your vision for the academy has, understandably, not yet been captured formally in an academy development plan. It is unfortunate that there was no existing plan good enough to be used as a basis for your work. However, you have already begun the process of assembling a strategic plan, and you and your new senior team will prioritise its production over the remainder of this term. I will scrutinise this at my next visit.

The statement of action is a useful document, as far as it goes. It sets out a clear strategic response to the main issues that the academy needs to address, but the sponsors have failed to provide any timescales for the implementation of key aspects of the plan over the next 18 to 24 months. The interim indicators of success it contains are not underpinned by any delivery mechanism and may well need re-working when this essential detail is decided. Also, some inconsistencies in the achievement targets for Key Stage 4 need to be ironed out.

Over this academic year, and particularly since the previous inspection, the sponsors have increased their level of support for the academy significantly. As well as supporting improvements in English and mathematics, AET will continue to broker support from other local good or outstanding schools, particularly The Romsey School, and Hounslow School. The Executive Principal is a national leader of education (NLE) and has already used his extensive contacts to support the work of the academy, including using mathematics teachers from The Romsey School to assist. AET has also been instrumental in establishing a clear division of responsibilities among the new senior team. Hampshire local education authority

services are appropriately well regarded in the academy and their support for various aspects of its work, including in several foundation subjects, will continue.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made.

- The sponsor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.
- The academy's action plans are not fit for purpose.
- Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers, after discussion with me around the balance of any appointments across subjects, and after assuring me of high quality provision for their support and development from The Romsey School.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Management Board, the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire, and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**