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26 September 2014

Mrs K Godsall  
The 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 with Deborah Wring, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 24 and 25 September 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

- the academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures
- both the academy's action plans and the sponsor's statement of action are now fit for purpose
- the academy may continue to appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs), after discussion with me around the balance of any appointments across subjects, and after assuring me of continued high quality provision for their support and development from The Romsey School.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Management Board, the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire, the Education Funding Agency, and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

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

## Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better by consistently checking that all teachers:
  - set and mark homework regularly, give students clear advice about how they can improve their work and plan time for them to absorb and respond to the comments they receive
  - explore the meaning of subject-specific and general words in all subjects and extend students' vocabulary and writing skills
  - provide work which matches students' different abilities, including in classes which are setted
  - observe and learn from the high quality teaching that exists in the academy.
- Increase progress to raise standards by ensuring that:
  - the percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, matches the national average in 2014
  - all students, particularly the most able, aim for and attain higher GCSE grades and the percentage of A\*/A grades rises
  - the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is narrowed to at least that seen nationally
  - students supported by the pupil premium make the same good progress they have made in Key Stage 3 when they move into Key Stage 4
  - progress is more rapid in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, particularly for students with special educational needs
  - steps are taken to address underachievement in subjects which performed significantly below the national average in 2013.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that senior leaders:
  - are realistic about the academy's performance and energetically seek to improve it
  - confirm standards and levels of progress by supporting and analysing middle leaders' work and using external support to check their predictions for students' progress are correct
  - act swiftly when underachievement is identified
  - extend the content of professional development for middle leaders and teachers
  - sharpen their assessment of the quality of teaching and learning
  - work more effectively with staff to eliminate any unacceptable student behaviour.
- Meet all statutory requirements for safeguarding by senior leaders and governors by:
  - checking regularly that the single central register is complete and up to date
  - reviewing the child protection policy annually
  - improving the quality of training on safeguarding and child protection and ensure that all staff receive it

- sharpening the analysis and records on behaviour, bullying and racist incidents, children on the child protection register, children of concern and students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 September 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised planning documents and met with the Principal, the Executive Principal, other senior staff and middle leaders, the Chair of the Management Board and other members, some of whom represented the sponsors, Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), and groups of pupils. Nineteen lessons were observed, many jointly with senior staff, and shorter visits to seven other lessons were undertaken.

### **Context**

Since the previous visit the Interim Principal has been appointed as substantive Principal of the academy. An Assistant Vice-Principal has been appointed from within the staff to lead pastoral support, and to be the special educational needs coordinator. The subject leader for English has been seconded to the senior team. A literacy coordinator and a lead practitioner in science have been appointed.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Examination results in 2014 continued to demonstrate an upward trend in students' overall achievement. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or better, including in English and mathematics, increased to 53%, bringing it nearer to the national average. Students' achievements in English improved dramatically; the proportion obtaining a grade C or better was above the national average because many made the progress expected of them. This good progress is evident in English lessons currently. Other subjects in which students' achievement improved included: French, in which over 90% of grades were at grade C or better; drama, which improved its proportion of grade Cs or better significantly; and BTEC physical education and BTEC health and social care which maintained their 100% pass rate.

Outcomes in mathematics in 2014 improved from 2013, but not enough. This is because the proportion of students making the progress expected of them remained too low. Achievement in mathematics is not improving rapidly enough because teaching in this subject is not yet good enough. Other subjects in which achievement needs to be better include catering, English literature, history, and engineering.

Gaps between the performance of disadvantaged students and their peers remain significant and more remains to be done to accelerate the progress of students who benefit from the pupil premium funding. Differences in the attainment of girls and boys in the 2014 examinations increased. However, boys' overall progress was only marginally less than that of girls in English and mathematics. The progress made by more able students is still not good enough; the proportion of A\* and A grades at

GCSE was still only 14% in 2014, falling short of the national average by a significant extent. Provision for students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is currently in the process of reorganisation. The academy has too little useful information on their progress yet, but it is clear that their achievement is not yet secure in many subjects.

The catch-up premium is used very effectively in English. For example, it supported all of the students involved to make the progress expected of them by the end of Year 8 in 2013/14. In mathematics, only 62% are making progress to this extent by the end of Year 8.

### **The quality of teaching**

A higher proportion of teaching is good or better now than has been the case for many years. Many teachers are using a wider range of teaching strategies and students say that lessons are more lively and interesting. Most students feel strongly that the academy is improving and that they are now learning better. They attribute this to better teaching and better leadership. Nearly two thirds of the teaching overall is now judged as good by the academy, and very little is inadequate. Teaching in English, physical education, French and geography is now securely good. However, teaching in several subjects still requires improvement, particularly in mathematics.

Teachers' planning is now more thorough. The objectives for the learning in each lesson are expressed more clearly but are not always used to steer the learning well enough. The quality of the marking of students' work is better. These improvements are good examples of the staff responding well to the Principal's requirements for better practice. In some lessons, students are given time to respond to the marking and develop their understanding of key points. They obviously benefit from this when it is done well and they appreciate the guidance they are given. Homework is beginning to be set more reliably and students also find this helpful to their learning.

There is still too little attention given to meeting the needs of groups of students, including those with disabilities and special educational needs. There are too many examples of the same work being given to students of all levels of ability. This means that some students struggle and others remain insufficiently challenged. This is because the academy's information about the achievements of groups of students in each subject is not sufficiently compelling.

Some teachers are beginning to acquire a good grasp of how well students are understanding ideas and gaining in knowledge over parts of a lesson. There is still insufficient continual assessment of the quality of learning, however. This means that some teachers fail to respond appropriately to students' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge because they are not spotted.

Literacy is not yet being addressed in a sufficiently consistent and effective way. A literacy coordinator has been appointed recently and the academy has plans to rapidly accelerate the teaching of specific literacy strategies in all classrooms.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is now generally calm, respectful and cooperative in lessons and around the academy. Students report some low-level disruption remains, especially in the afternoon lessons. Students are appreciative of good teaching and usually forgiving when it is uninspiring. Many can sit quietly in lessons, and will take part in practical activities, but relatively few yet have a range of well-developed strategies to improve their learning. This is because too few teachers are helping them to develop enough of these skills. This means that many students neither ask for help, volunteer answers often enough, nor speak up in class discussions. This compromises the quality of their learning in many lessons.

Students are safe and well cared for. All statutory aspects of safeguarding are now in place and the academy has made all of the necessary improvements to ensure that staff induction and training, and the appointment of staff, are carried out to the necessarily high standards. There have been no instances of safeguarding referrals to the local authority, and no serious safeguarding incidents dealt with by the academy since the previous visit. The academy responds rapidly and effectively to any child protection issues.

Many students, particularly those in Key Stage 4, have an interest in issues around equalities and diversity. However, several want more of a lead from the academy about cultural, faith-based and sexual-preference differences to prepare them better for life in modern Britain.

Attendance has continued to improve and is now broadly in line with the national average. There has been a reduction in the proportion of students who are persistently absent. Too few disadvantaged students attend well enough yet. Incidents of exclusion have reduced. Records of attendance and exclusion are kept and analysed well. However, records of incidents of misbehaviour, bullying and racist incidents are not completed consistently, so patterns in misbehaviour cannot always be spotted and dealt with reliably.

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

The Principal is continuing to exert a strong and positive influence on the day-to-day work of the academy. She maintains high expectations of students and staff, has a high profile around the site, and communicates a strong vision. She is well supported by her senior team. The impact of this has been to give the academy greater confidence and vitality than it has had for a long time. Students now show more

pride in their work and as members of the academy. Parents and local schools are beginning to recognise the transformation taking place here.

The academy's action plan is now in place. It is a thorough and very useful, if rather lengthy, document which identifies all of the right priorities and gives extensive information about the strategies to be used to bring about the improvements necessary. The academy's self-evaluation is thorough and honest; the Principal knows what needs improving and she has made a strong start.

Many middle leaders are gaining in confidence about putting the Principal's vision into practice. They value the good challenge and support they get from the senior team. There is now better academy-wide leadership of the quality of teaching and this is making a difference. Teaching is judged accurately in the academy. Several middle leaders show a good understanding of their role in this process. They are beginning to exert their own influence on teaching quality successfully in their subjects. Several teachers are being given individual targeted support, in many cases this is beginning to make a real difference to the quality of their teaching. Reviews of the work of subject areas have begun and involve key staff from other schools, including The Romsey School. The first of these was in mathematics in July 2014 and resulted in a well-focused action plan for improvement.

Provision to support students with disabilities and special educational needs has been radically reorganised since the previous visit, to improve its capacity to students' needs. An Assistant Vice-Principal has taken leadership of this area and has already restructured the team after a skills audit. The Fresh Start provision, which aimed to meet the needs of students who struggled in the classroom, is appropriately much reduced in scale as teachers gain in the skills necessary to motivate and maintain good progress for all students.

Information around students' achievements highlights overall trends and patterns but does not concentrate sufficiently closely on the progress of groups of students such as the disadvantaged and those with special educational needs. Neither can it yet accurately gauge the success of interventions.

The academy is continuing to improve how closely it works with parents and the local community. A new parent forum has recently convened and has begun to work with the academy around reporting systems. The newsletter and the website continue to convey useful and important information to parents.

The Management Board is maintaining close oversight of the academy's work. There are representatives of the sponsors, and of local primary schools and local industry, on this board. Between them they have an impressive range of skills and educational and leadership expertise. They use their experience and collective wisdom to offer considerable support and appropriate amounts of challenge to the leadership of the

academy. They know and understand the work of the academy very well, and are playing an important part in its improvement.

### **External support**

The sponsor, AET, is providing strong support for the leadership of the academy through its representation on the Management Board. It has also provided good support for English, and it is working closely with the academy to make the necessary improvements in mathematics teaching and learning. The Executive Principal offers good quality advice and guidance to the Principal, including around the management of the budget, particularly in working to reduce the overspend. He is also, with the business manager, bringing about the improvements in the site and facilities over recent months that the Principal has requested. There is also useful challenge and support provided by the academy improvement adviser. The sponsor also coordinates the work of the 'Quad' group which meets to oversee the quality of the work of the academy, and check its progress.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection AET has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that its statement of action is fit for purpose.