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2 October 2014

Dr David Dennison  
Headteacher  
Hope Academy  
Ashton Road  
Newton-le-Willows  
Merseyside  
WA12 0AQ

Dear Dr Dennison

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hope Academy**

Following my visit to your academy with Beverley Barlow and Philippa Darley Her Majesty's Inspectors on 30 September and 1 October 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 February 2014. 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 school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

The sponsor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for St Helens.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy, but especially in Key Stage 3 by:
  - ensuring that teachers continue to develop their subject knowledge to ensure that they are able to teach their subjects with confidence
  - developing teachers' skills in using a range of appropriate strategies to enable them to engage with students and impact more effectively on their learning and progress
  - focusing in lessons on developing students' skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject rather than merely completing tasks
  - ensuring that marking is regular, of high quality and informs students on how they can improve their work.
  
- Improve the progress and achievement of all groups of students, including those in the sixth form, in all subjects, but especially those students supported by pupil premium, boys and the most able by:
  - making sure assessment and monitoring of student progress is accurate and rigorous to enable appropriate work to be set in order that good learning can take place
  - checking the progress of individuals and groups of students regularly and robustly so that leaders and teachers can take swift action to address any underachievement
  - providing more opportunities for students to develop and apply their skills in mathematics and writing to other subjects
  - giving higher level, more demanding work to the more able students.
  
- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
  - eradicating poor behaviour in lessons to ensure that students' opportunities to learn are not compromised through low-level and persistent disruption
  - ensuring that, as a matter of priority, all students involved in off-site education are safe by making sure that their attendance is recorded and reported to the academy within an hour of when they are due to attend each off-site session
  - ensuring that students attend the academy on a regular basis and that any absenteeism is chased up as a matter of routine.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
  - increasing the rigour with which teaching is monitored to ensure that teachers are perfectly clear about which aspects need to be improved and why
  - ensuring that monitoring focuses clearly on how well students learn
  - taking swift action to eradicate inadequate teaching
  - making use of the training, resources and advice offered by the various subject associations to provide subject leaders with the knowledge and expertise to enable them to offer appropriate advice to their colleagues on how to further improve their planning and practice
  - requiring all subject leaders to be fully involved in checking that students are making good progress in lessons and that teachers' planning promotes learning which builds on previous lessons

- making sure that performance management links teachers' pay progression more closely to improvements in the classroom
- evaluating the impact of pupil premium funding on students' learning to ensure that it is being spent wisely and provides good value for money
- ensuring that governors act on the recommendations of the forthcoming independent review of governance.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 30 September to 1 October 2014.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Interim Principal, Principal Designate, sponsors, senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of students and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with lunch-time supervisors, parents and the bus drivers.

### **Context**

Many staff left the school in the summer. Some temporary teachers are in place until permanently appointed staff are able to take up post. A senior leadership restructure has taken place. Only one senior leader retained their post. A National Leader of Education has been appointed to monitor standards on behalf of the sponsors and will begin her work soon.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Progress has declined since the previous monitoring inspection. GCSE results in the summer were lower than anticipated and there are still no reliable data to illustrate progress at Key Stage 3. Progress observed by inspectors in lessons and work in students' books indicate that current progress is no better.

Many students, including boys, the most able and those who are known to be eligible for pupil premium (additional government funding), make very limited progress in lessons because much of the teaching is poor quality and fails to capture their interests and imagination.

Some students are unable to make the progress of which they are capable because there is inadequate support for their literacy needs. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, students were asked to complete questions about Julius Caesar from a worksheet. However, some of them could not read or understand the words because they were inappropriate for their ability. This led to frustration and no progress for some.

Achievement of pupils in the sixth form is inadequate and declined further this year. Although students make good progress on BTEC courses, the pass rate at AS level is poor and only two thirds of students who sit the examination achieve a qualification. Pass rates at A level are higher but below the high national rate. The proportion of students achieving a grade C in their resit GCSE for English and mathematics is very low, severely limiting their options for higher education.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching in the sixth form and main school is poor. Teaching often fails to inspire students and there is little difference between the work provided for the most able

and the least able students. Books are not always marked and do not always tell students how to make better progress.

Many students have weak literacy skills and are inadequately supported, resulting in very little progress. Some students told inspectors that in a typical week, most of their lessons were interrupted by poor behaviour and this had a detrimental effect on their progress.

In the sixth form many students had significant gaps in their knowledge prior to this year's examinations and had to learn aspects of the course on their own just before their examination. There is some poor quality coursework and some did not meet the standards of the awarding body.

In a Year 8 music lesson students learnt about syncopation. Most students were engaged but some boys were not interested. Students were asked to sing while sitting down, which did not allow them to sing to the best of their ability and missed the opportunity to create a moment when the group could sing in harmony and create a sense of community.

In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, one boy was sent out of the class to internal exclusion. When the inspector entered the room a number of students had climbed into a cupboard while others encouraged them. They were not effectively challenged by the teacher and neither middle nor senior leaders were present to assist the teacher or ensure that those who misbehaved would receive an appropriate sanction.

By contrast, in a Year 8 art lesson students were very well behaved and made good progress due to careful and precise planning by the teacher enabling them to use a variety of techniques to shade a picture. The teacher's manner was positive and caring; she regularly assessed students' work and highlighted good examples so that others could improve their pieces.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Too many students show a lack of respect for authority. They do not do as they are told and are not effectively reprimanded for poor behaviour. Behaviour in some lessons is inadequate. This is because the leadership and management of behaviour and safety are not good enough. Temporary teachers and those who are new to teaching do not always get sufficient support to deal with students' poor behaviour.

The system for managing behaviour leads to inequalities, resulting in disproportionately high exclusions of boys, those who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. Sanctions are inconsistently applied, resulting in some students receiving a detention and others an internal exclusion for the same misdemeanour.

At social times students do not always behave well if they are not in sight of an adult and it is very difficult to identify the adults on duty from a distance. Too much litter is dropped outside, some students do not follow instructions given by lunch-time supervisors and members of teaching staff do not always support the supervisors in disciplining students.

More students are educated off site than last year. This is costing the school approximately £150,000. A number of these students do not attend the provision arranged for them yet they are still marked as present on the school role. This presents a potential safeguarding concern.

A few students told inspectors that they did not feel safe in school. This is because they feel bullying is not dealt with effectively. Students and staff report regular fighting in school. A few parents also reported concerns over bullying not being dealt with and there is concern over students' behaviour on school buses.

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

The governors are frustrated that despite their best efforts, standards have fallen. No one can dispute governors' high expectations, aspirations and steadfast resolution. Governors have tackled poor leadership head on; consequently, only one senior leader has retained their post.

Governors have externally appointed three new senior leaders, including a Principal with a strong track record of high standards. Sponsors and governors are working tirelessly to try and put their chosen team in place as quickly as possible to prevent standards falling further.

The statement of action is still not fit for purpose because it does not set out clearly to governors what evidence of improvements needs to be provided and when. This has led to a lack of clarity around current standards.

There are key weaknesses in the leadership and management of the sixth form. Students are not recruited with integrity and many end up on inappropriate courses. Around one third of students leave the sixth form either during or at the end of their first year of an advanced-level course.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning have limited impact as the breadth of poor teaching is much more extensive than first thought. This is because some teachers are still receiving an over-optimistic view of progress in their lessons during observations by senior leaders.

Monitoring by middle leaders is not thorough enough as some teachers are still getting away with not marking students' work and ignoring poor behaviour.

The single central record meets requirements but some serious concerns were raised around the leadership and management of behaviour and safety. These will be referred to the senior HMI for the area and may affect the timing of the next inspection.

### **External support**

The academy has made links with a National Leader of education and a number of other schools for support. As key people are not yet in place, there has been little impact.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Take immediate action to ensure that sixth-form students receive adequate provision.
- Introduce a fair system to manage behaviour and prevent bullying. Ensure that the system is applied consistently by all staff so that all students feel safe in school.
- Strengthen the teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship to reduce discrimination and bullying.