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Ms Amanda Bibby
The Interim Principal
St Aldhelm's Academy
Herbert Avenue
Poole
BH12 4HS

Dear Ms Bibby

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Aldhelm's Academy

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2015 with James Sage, Her Majesty's Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you to the staff and leaders for the help they gave during the inspection and for the time they 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 special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2014.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted at no-notice. During this inspection, meetings were held with the assistant principal, a representative from The Aldridge Foundation, currently supporting academy leaders and the director of finance. Discussions took place with representatives of the Diocese of Salisbury, the governing body and Poole local authority. Inspectors conducted short visits to lessons and spoke to students and staff. The proprietor's statement of action was evaluated.

Context

The academy is experiencing a time of considerable turmoil. A new sponsor has not yet been appointed to take over the running of the academy. During this visit, the academy was only open to Year 11 students due to the academy being unable to ensure the safety of students and staff. The interim Principal was not at the academy during this visit.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

- St Aldhelm's Academy is dysfunctional and unsafe.
- Leaders have failed to tackle the areas identified as requiring improvement when the academy was placed into special measures in October 2014. Little evidence of any improvement exists.
- The behaviour of students has deteriorated rapidly. The proportion of students excluded from the academy is high. Verbal abuse of staff is common and some staff have been subject to physical assaults.
- Students opt in and out of lessons. Many cause havoc around the academy by running around the corridors during lessons, disrupting learning. Some students leave lessons to go outside to have a cigarette. Leaders at the academy are unable to ensure that students and staff are safe.
- Leaders have failed to tackle the academy's serious shortcomings. Morale is low. Staff and students are unsure of the expectations of them; this leads to a dysfunctional organisation.
- Many students have high aspirations for their future. However, they are making little progress and will underachieve. Students' life chances are inhibited by inadequate teaching and low expectations from staff.
- Work in students' books indicates that students make poor progress. Teachers' feedback and marking are weak and inconsistent. Students accept they are underachieving. Teachers 'contain' students; their focus is on limiting poor behaviour instead of enabling students to achieve well.
- The academy operates a significant deficit budget. This has led to a reduction in staff.
- The academy's statement of action is not fit for purpose. Targets set are too low and lack aspiration. Actions do not provide enough detail to understand how rapid improvements will be made. Regular targets are not set to enable leaders to evaluate the progress the academy is making. There is no individual evaluation of key actions.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The proprietor'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 (NQTs).

- The Regional Schools Commissioner should take urgent action to:
 - restore the safe running of this academy
 - identify, and implement, new sponsorship arrangements at the academy to halt the rapid decline in standards of achievement and behaviour.
- Academy leaders should take urgent action to:

- ensure the safe day-to-day running of the academy
 - restore effective teaching, particularly for those students in Years 11 and 13, to enable them to progress successfully to the next stage of their education or life
 - review and implement a statement of action that clearly details the actions that will bring about rapid improvement.
- Poole local authority should take urgent action to:
- work with academy leaders to ensure the safety of students and staff.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese of Salisbury, the Department for Education Academy Advisers' Unit and the Director of Children's Services for Poole. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector