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Ms Sian Thomas  
Principal  
St Aldhelm's Academy  
Herbert Avenue  
Poole  
BH12 4HS

Dear Ms Thomas

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Aldhelm's Academy**

Following my visit with Katherine Powell, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 24 and 25 November 2015, 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 third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 academy is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may 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 for Education, the Education Funding Agency, the Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Poole.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, so that students make at least good progress by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations of all students and set challenging targets for the progress students should make, especially in English, mathematics and science
  - students with disabilities and those with special educational needs, those who are at risk of underachieving and the most able are provided with effective support and challenge, including through homework
  - teachers' marking and feedback consistently enable students to improve the quality of their work
  - accurate assessment information is used well across all year groups to plan work that matches the learning needs of different groups of students
  - teaching focuses closely on raising standards of literacy and developing mathematical skills
  - the arrangements for teaching classes in the open plan areas are improved.
  
- Raise students' achievement throughout the academy, particularly in English, mathematics and science, so that standards are at least in line with national averages by:
  - rigorously checking that all students are making at least expected rates of progress, especially students supported through the pupil premium, students with disabilities, those who have special educational needs and the most able
  - ensuring that all additional adults helping students in lessons support learning effectively.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels by:
  - increasing the rigour with which leaders, including those responsible for subjects, check on the quality of teaching
  - ensuring that judgements on the quality of teaching are linked closely to students' achievement and take account of the most up-to-date information on students' progress
  - implementing a robust, structured programme of support for individual teachers to enable them to improve the quality of their teaching
  - ensuring leaders at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities and are accountable for their actions
  - ensuring that the curriculum is fit for purpose so that all students can achieve well, including in the sixth form.

- Improve students' behaviour by:
  - setting clear expectations for students' behaviour and conduct, and ensuring that all staff consistently follow the academy's behaviour management policy
  - ensuring that all students engage fully in learning in lessons
  - reducing the number of students who are temporarily excluded from learning.
  
- Improve the sixth-form provision by:
  - providing well-planned and well-managed individual study programmes
  - securing effective contribution of partners and employers in the arrangements for future employability
  - ensuring that all sixth-form students are placed on courses that match their levels of ability.
  
- Improve the attendance of those students who do not attend regularly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 November 2015**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, we met with you, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and the Chief Executive Officer of the Ambitions Academies Trust. We scrutinised the academy's records relating to pupils' outcomes, behaviour and safeguarding, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and the academy's development plan. We carried out 27 lesson observations, all of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.

### **Context**

There have been significant changes to staffing at the academy since the last monitoring visit in May 2015. You have appointed a new subject leader for English, a special educational needs coordinator, a learning and teaching coordinator, an achievement coordinator and three heads of year. Thirteen new teachers started at the academy in September 2015. The sixth form has just seven leaders in Year 13. The sixth form will not remain open after this academic year.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

You and your senior leaders have transformed the quality of education provided at St Aldhelm's Academy. Highly effective systems and processes implemented by leaders have rapidly improved pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their learning. Teachers have grown in confidence and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. The academy is now a place where pupils enjoy their learning and a harmonious atmosphere is now evident across the academy.

Leaders communicate much higher expectations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Robust structures and good training are now in place to support teachers in more effective planning to deliver better quality teaching. Leaders' analyses of the quality of teaching during joint observations were fully in line with our views. The academy is well poised to focus more intently on speeding up the progress pupils make across all year groups and subjects.

Leaders have strengthened the processes to manage the performance of staff. Targets set for teachers relate to more aspirational targets for pupils' outcomes and also closely to teachers taking more responsibility for developing the quality of their own teaching. You have raised significantly the expectations on subject leaders to monitor and evaluate their departments' effectiveness. More regular scrutiny of the quality of work pupils produce ensures that subject leaders better understand the impact teaching has on pupils' progress. Not all subject leaders, though, ensure a

consistent approach across their departments of teachers providing high-quality feedback to pupils, as required by the academy's policy.

The Ambitions Academies Trust provides highly effective support and challenge to leaders at the academy. Through the regular and accurate reviews of the academy's effectiveness, it has a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve further. The academy's action plan is now fit for purpose. It has very clear targets in place, and well-defined actions together with rigorous monitoring and evaluation to bring about more rapid improvement.

Recent curriculum changes enable pupils to study subjects better suited to their individual needs. In particular, greater opportunities exist for pupils to study languages and humanities. The weekly enrichment programme enables all pupils to experience activities that inspire and motivate them. Pupils fully embrace these opportunities and speak highly of the rich cultural experiences they can now access, including art, textiles, sport and 'show-time'.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of the better teaching which is evident across the academy. Targets that are now set for pupils are highly aspirational; they relate to every pupil making at least good progress and for many, outstanding progress.

Overall, pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 11 in 2015 were well below the national average. You expected this due to the poor teaching these pupils had received in the past. Teachers worked hard to enable pupils to achieve as well as possible with some success. Current Year 11 pupils are aware that they are not yet achieving their targets but they are making much better progress than before.

Work in pupils' books across all year groups and most subjects indicate that pupils are now achieving well across many subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Clear, raised expectations demand more of teachers and pupils. They have risen to this challenge well.

Leaders have recently implemented effective monitoring systems to ensure that they have an accurate view of how each pupil is progressing and to provide extra personalised support when needed. Leaders closely scrutinise teachers' predictions on pupils' performance alongside the work in their books. This scrutiny gives them a more thorough understanding of each pupil's progress towards his or her targets.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since my previous visit and continues to improve. As a result of pupils' positive behaviour, teachers have far more confidence. Teachers communicate much higher expectations of the amount of work pupils produce and also of their behaviour.

Teaching is now typified by very strong working relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers, and feel confident to ask questions and to offer their opinions. Lessons proceed at a good pace and the best use is made of learning time.

Teachers now plan in more depth. They better understand the needs of all pupils, including those with disabilities, have special educational needs or are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Pupils respond well to being challenged by their teachers. They work well together and on their own on complex problems. Occasionally, some teachers do not effectively focus their planning on what they want pupils to learn. Pupils complete many tasks, but teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to think more deeply about their learning to consolidate and extend their understanding of key concepts and ideas.

Most teachers provide pupils with more regular feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils recognise that this is helpful in enabling them to take more responsibility for their own learning. Some teachers, however, do not always provide clear advice to pupils on how to improve their work; the feedback lacks clear guidance and pupils are unclear of the next steps they need to take.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils' behaviour has been transformed in a short time at the academy. An academy that was described as 'dysfunctional and unsafe' is now an environment that pupils love to attend, enjoy school and have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. Pupils wear their new uniforms with pride. They overwhelmingly acknowledge the extent to which behaviour has improved and are now, rightly, proud to be part of St Aldhelm's Academy.

In lessons, pupils respect their teachers. They work well on their own and with each other. They respond well to being challenged and a real buzz of learning is evident in classrooms. Pupils now take great pride in the presentation of their work.

Pupils are now able to be fully involved in decision making at the academy through the implementation of prefects, principal students and house captains. Pupils regularly meet with leaders and provide their thoughts and opinions on what is going

well and what could be even better. One pupil said, 'We feel really listened to'. Pupils are very proud to be on panels now for the appointment of staff as they have very clear views that they only want the best teachers to work with them.

Attendance levels are improving very quickly. Pupils better understand the importance of attending regularly. Very few pupils now receive a fixed-term exclusion as a result of the significant improvement of pupils' behaviour.

Policies and procedures to safeguard pupils have been effectively strengthened. The checks made on staff employed at the academy are now thorough. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe when on the internet. Pupils indicate that bullying is now rare but, if it were to happen, they have confidence that staff at the academy would deal with any issues swiftly.

### **External support**

The academy accesses high-quality support from the Ambitions Academy Trust and also helpful support from Ringwood School. All aspects of the academy have improved and continue to improve.

The trust provides targeted support to develop the quality of teaching and leadership at all levels. The trust's expertise in improving behaviour has been highly effective in ensuring that the academy is now a calm and safe place.