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18 December 2018

Mr Anthony Williams  
Principal  
Felixstowe Academy  
High Street  
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Suffolk  
IP11 9QR

Dear Mr Williams

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

Following my visit with Adrian Lyons, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Kathryn Herlock, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4–5 December 2018, 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may continue to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2017.**

- Improve pupils' personal development and welfare by:
  - ensuring that there are robust systems in place to deal effectively with bullying
  - promoting a culture where all pupils feel safe
  - providing timely, regular and effective instruction on the impact of all forms of bullying so that pupils are confident in reporting concerns to adults
  - ensuring that all issues of bullying are dealt with promptly and consistently, in line with clear and robust policies.
- Improve pupils' achievement by:
  - increasing the progress that disadvantaged pupils make so that they perform at least as well as all other pupils nationally
  - developing effective strategies to support pupils with SEND so that they make progress that is at least similar to all pupils nationally with the same starting points
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is consistently good and that adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - accelerating the pace of school improvement by embedding clear and systematic monitoring of the impact of leaders' work on the progress that pupils make
  - developing effective strategies to reduce rates of pupils' absence, persistent absence and fixed-term exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND
  - restoring positive relationships with parents so that they have confidence in the school's leadership.

An external review of the school'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 second monitoring inspection on 4 December 2018 to 5 December 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body, the national director of secondary schools from the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) and a subject consultant from AET. Inspectors also held a telephone conversation with a system leader from the AET, who operates as a school improvement partner. Inspectors met with groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most of these pupils were chosen by the inspection team. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally when visiting lessons and when observing pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.

Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all key stages in a range of subjects. These observations were carried out with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' books when visiting lessons and looked more closely at a selection of Year 8 and Year 10 pupils' books. Inspectors also watched an assembly and observed pupils at breaks and lunchtime.

Inspectors reviewed the school's arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils. This included scrutinising the school's single central record of the checks made to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children and young people.

### **Context**

At the end of the previous academic year, 25 teachers left the school. The school was fully staffed at the start of the autumn term. There has been a recent decision to re-broker sponsorship of the school. The current sponsor, AET, will continue to be responsible for the running of the school and provide their programme of support until new sponsorship arrangements are in place.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The principal and the senior leadership team continue to lead staff effectively and ensure that they are focused on making the improvements that are needed. Leaders, governors and the trust have a shared vision for the school's development. A 'no excuses' culture has been established. Raised expectations of pupils and teachers are evident. The very large majority of teachers are rising to the challenge, which is having a positive impact on improving the quality of education provided. Notable improvements have been made since the previous monitoring inspection. However, leaders, governors and trust representatives realise that the pace of change needs to increase. Leaders have responded to the decision to change the

school's sponsor in a very professional manner. School leaders and the trust are determined that they maintain the focus on improving the quality of education provided. AET representatives were clear that, while they were disappointed by the decision, they will work to ensure that transition to a new sponsor takes place smoothly. AET will continue to provide support at the level needed by the school until a new sponsor is in place.

Leaders have continued to monitor closely the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Monitoring is now making links between what is observed in lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and the progress pupils make. This clearly identifies what teachers do well and where further improvement is required. Where teaching is weak leaders have provided support, but leaders continue to take decisive action when teachers do not respond to this or make the necessary improvement. Inspectors' joint observations of learning confirmed that senior leaders can accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and identify how well teaching is supporting pupils to make sustained progress. Teachers, including those new to the profession, commented positively on the training and support provided. This is well-balanced between whole-school priorities and the development needs of individuals. They have opportunities to learn from the best practice in the school and elsewhere.

Middle leaders are continuing to develop in their roles and play an important part in securing improvement. They are increasingly involved in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The systems introduced and noted at the previous monitoring inspection are used to hold middle leaders to account. They feel well supported by senior leaders and appreciate the responsibility and autonomy delegated to them. Leaders continue to provide appropriate support and development opportunities to support middle leaders, particularly those who are relatively new to their roles. In addition, middle leaders have had the opportunity to benefit from working in networks provided by the trust and external organisations.

The 31 responses submitted this academic year to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, reflect a more positive view of the school than was the case last year. Significantly, all respondents felt that their child was safe in the school. Parents were also much more positive regarding the school's response to bullying, pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching and how well the school is led and managed. The very large majority of respondents would recommend the school, whereas last year, most parents would not do so. This is an indication of the progress that has been made since the full inspection in November 2017. However, there remains work to be done to change parents' perceptions and increase their engagement. The principal has continued with his fortnightly parents' surgeries and communicates with parents through regular newsletters and the use of social media.

The restructured local governing body has continued to provide effective challenge to senior leaders. Consequently, the trust and local governing body have an

accurate view of the school's effectiveness and know what needs to improve further.

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

Inspectors' observations of learning, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils indicate that the quality of teaching is continuing to improve. However, teaching is not consistently effective across the school. The principal has clearly set and established higher expectations of teachers. Leaders have put in place common systems for planning lessons, assessment and feedback. Teachers are aware of what they must do. However, these common approaches are not consistently securing strong progress for pupils and ensuring that all teaching is equally effective. Although middle leaders are ensuring that systems are followed, they are not all accurately evaluating their impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Leaders have placed great emphasis on teachers providing appropriate challenge to pupils and having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Inspectors saw examples of very effective teaching where activities were well matched to pupils' abilities. These built upon pupils' interests to motivate them in their learning. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson, the teacher used artefacts brought by a pupil to engage the class, including a large number of pupils with SEND, in learning about the First World War. Inspectors saw examples of where pupils were directed to different levels of challenge, appropriately matched to their prior knowledge. This practice is not yet consistent across the school. Inspectors' observations confirmed leaders' own findings that in some cases pupils are not moved on to more challenging work quickly enough. Some teachers do not provide different levels of support to allow all pupils to access learning tasks.

Pupils say that the quality of teaching is improving. They explained that this is due to there being fewer temporary teachers, more consistent learning routines and more consistent expectations of behaviour. As a result, most pupils spoken to during the inspection feel that they are making better progress.

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

Improvements in the effectiveness of the school's response to bullying identified at the previous monitoring inspection have continued. The very large majority of pupils spoken to during the inspection feel that bullying incidents have reduced and that they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils show a very good understanding of what bullying is and the harm that it causes. Pupils appreciate the introduction of an app which provides another way for them to report concerns. Some pupils would like more information on what actions have been taken when they have reported bullying. School records show that the incidents of bullying reported have decreased and that staff analyse this information well to target their work and support.

Pupils report that behaviour in lessons and around the school has continued to improve. They are aware of the expectations of behaviour and feel that teachers are more consistent in both their expectations and application of the behaviour and rewards system. Improvements in behaviour are reflected by a decrease in fixed-period exclusions and the use of the school's internal exclusion room. However, disadvantaged pupils are still over-represented in the number of pupils excluded from school. Inspectors saw examples of positive relationships and effective learning in many classrooms. There are still instances of low-level disruption to learning and there is further work to do to improve the behaviour of a small core of pupils.

It was noted at the previous monitoring inspection that attendance was still too low. The principal has sharpened the processes for monitoring and following up absence. There have been improvements in attendance this term for some groups, but overall absence and persistent absence are still too high. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. The actions in place are appropriate but need to be evaluated fully to ensure that they are bringing about improvement quickly.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. However, they feel less confident at the end of the school day, reporting that some pupils smoke when off-site and that they are concerned that teachers are not aware of, and cannot take action about, incidents that take place outside of school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements remain effective. The necessary checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work in school are carried out and accurately recorded. The school's safeguarding policy has been revised to reflect the latest statutory guidance. Teachers have received training to ensure that they can recognise the signs that a pupil is at risk and are confident to report any concerns. Leaders report concerns to external agencies in a timely manner and work effectively with agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive any help that they need. Leaders have ensured that both staff and pupils have a good understanding of the risks posed by the criminal exploitation of children through County Lines. Inspectors observed an effective assembly that taught pupils about these risks and such issues are covered in your SPACE (social, personal, aspirational, careers and ethics) programme.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The provisional 2018 GCSE results show some improvement. Although the overall Progress 8 score remains below average, it shows some improvement compared with the previous year. Higher proportions of pupils attained standard and strong passes in English and mathematics. However, overall achievement is still too low, and boys' achievement was significantly weaker than that of girls. Achievement remained too low in a number of subjects, including geography and science. The principal has secured additional support for teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND also remained too low. Actions taken to support the progress of these groups over the

course of the year had some effect but could not make up for the legacy of weak teaching and low expectations in the past.

There has been a greater focus on providing appropriate challenge for all pupils and on improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Scrutiny of pupils' work, observations of learning and a review of school assessment information indicate that rates of progress and standards are improving, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. However, inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching mean that there are variations in progress. Where teaching is effective, pupils currently in the school make good progress. However, where teaching is less effective, progress is slower for all groups of pupils because teachers do not routinely provide challenge and support appropriate to pupils' needs.

The plan for the use of pupil premium funding is more tightly focused on addressing the barriers to learning identified and raising pupils' achievement. The vice principal monitoring the use of this funding has sharpened the ways in which the effectiveness of the actions taken will be evaluated. A similar approach has been taken to the provision and support for pupils with SEND. The more strategic use of assessment information to evaluate progress of groups and the quality of teaching noted at the previous monitoring inspection has continued.

### **External support**

Support for subject areas from AET consultants and specialist leaders in education has continued. There has been increased support for science and geography to address weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment and provide support for new subject leaders. The system leader, who acts as a school improvement partner, has continued to provide support and challenge to senior leaders, which has helped the principal to evaluate the effectiveness of his actions. Standardised assessments provided by the trust have improved the accuracy and reliability of assessment information. This means that individuals and groups that need additional support are accurately identified. Governors have more confidence in the performance information provided to them by leaders.

In addition to support from AET, the principal has also developed links with Eastwood Academy. This has provided further opportunities for senior and middle leaders to work alongside and share the ideas of effective leaders in a successful school with similar pupils. Leaders have also started work with an attendance officer from the local authority to support the school in its efforts to improve pupils' attendance.