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08 October 2010

Mr B Dunne  
Interim Principal  
Stockport Academy  
Heathbank Road  
Cheadle Heath  
Stockport  
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SK3 0UP

Dear Mr Dunne

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Stockport Academy**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 7 October 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please extend my thanks to others who gave up their time to meet with me including students, the Chair of the Local Governing Board, the Regional Executive of the United Learning Trust which sponsors the academy, and two associate Principals.

The Principal left at the end of the summer term. A vice-principal has been appointed as the interim Principal until at least Easter 2011. Two associate Principals were appointed to work part time at the academy from September 2010 to support the development of leadership and teaching and learning. A significant number of staff left at the end of the summer term 2010. In September, three new curriculum leaders took up post and nine newly qualified teachers started. The academy is currently appointing a new head of mathematics. The School Improvement Partner has been replaced.

As a result of the inspection on 10 and 11 February 2010, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making **good** progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Attainment has increased significantly since the last inspection. In 2010, the proportion of students gaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, doubled. The proportion gaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C increased markedly. In English, mathematics and science the proportion gaining at least a grade C increased significantly. Year 11 students made significantly improved progress in 2010 compared with 2009. The academy's GCSE targets were exceeded. Low attainment persisted in a few subjects.

At Key Stage 3, teacher assessment shows a significant increase in the proportion gaining Level 5 and Level 6 in English, mathematics and science. In addition, students made improved progress in all three subjects. The assessments in English and science were formally moderated and are more secure than the assessment in mathematics.

Students behave better as a result of higher expectations, greater consistency in managing behaviour and improved rewards. Students appreciate the greater visibility and intervention of senior staff in lessons and around the school. Attendance has improved as a result of rigorous analysis and targeted action, but remains below the national average. Persistent absence has been reduced but remains above average. Punctuality has improved due to an insistence on higher standards. However, there is still some lack of punctuality. As a result of staff development and additional curriculum provision for literacy, students have more opportunities to develop their oral and literacy skills.

The quality of teaching has improved as result of higher expectations of staff and students. There has also been a significant turnover in staff. As a result of improved teaching, students are learning better in lessons. However, teaching remains inconsistent. The proportion of inadequate teaching has been reduced but some remains, especially in mathematics. In some cases, students' prior learning is not identified accurately and some activities are still either too easy or too difficult. The proportion of good and outstanding teaching remains below the academy's targets. Lesson planning provides a more focused and logical sequence of activities. Students are more stretched. They value the increased level of feedback as a result of assessment each half term in all subjects and years, though some are not clear on how to improve. Peer assessment is developing and is used well in some lessons but is inconsistent in its quality.

Senior leaders are driving improvement strongly against an ambitious vision, and well-defined and high expectations. Improved outcomes are primarily the result of these high expectations and the systematic and frequent use of assessment and data analysis to identify and tackle underachievement. Senior leaders are rigorous in ensuring that actions are in place to support any student who is underachieving. The academy action plan has been evaluated by Ofsted and it fulfils the requirements. Success criteria and timescales are clear. Actions have been sharpened and accountability strengthened. Senior members of staff carry out rigorous observation of teaching, and specify aspects for improvement, in effective detail. Observations

are followed up with prompt and tailored support, and short timescales are set to meet targets. The role of middle leaders is developing and they have taken on increased responsibility for the quality of teaching and tackling underachievement. Governors are better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. As a result, the relationship between senior leaders and the Local Governing Board is stronger and more effective. The academy specialisms in science and business and enterprise are underdeveloped.

Additional support by staff from the United Learning Trust has been effective in accelerating change and in providing relevant professional support and development.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**Bernard Campbell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010**

Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement across the school, particularly at Key Stage 3 by:

- securing better progress in lessons and over time for all students
- improving students' basic skills, particularly in literacy and speaking, to strengthen their ability to learn independently
- promoting positive attitudes to learning
- increasing attendance further.

Improve the quality of teaching, increasing the proportion that is good by:

- ensuring lesson plans sequence learning carefully
- adopting a systematic approach to tackling weaknesses and inconsistencies and to sharing the good practice in the academy.

Develop teachers' use of assessment in:

- planning suitably challenging lessons that take account of students' starting points, individual needs and potential
- gauging students' understanding, identifying and unpicking errors and misconceptions and adapting lessons accordingly
- providing pertinent feedback to students.

Increase the clarity and effectiveness with which leaders drive improvement by:

- sharpening actions and success criteria within development plans
- developing leaders' skills of evaluating what has worked well, what has not, and why.