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8 December 2011

Miss Charlotte Blencowe
Principal
Academy 360
Portsmouth Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR4 9BA

Dear Miss Blencowe

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Academy 360

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected the academy on 7 December 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

The Principal left in October and at the time of my visit had been replaced by an acting Principal who started at the academy in September this year together with a new deputy principal for learning and development. Five trainee teachers have been appointed, including four from the Teach First programme.

As a result of the inspection on 11 and 12 April 2011, 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

The students' attainment is steadily increasing, many from low starting points. Inspection evidence confirms the academy's current information that achievement across the year groups is continuing to improve. For example, 35% of students gained five GCSE A*-C including English and mathematics in 2011 compared with 21% in 2010. Results are on track to meet and exceed challenging targets in 2012.

The academy's data show that the proportion of students making at least satisfactory and good progress is steadily increasing. It recognises standards of written work are improving as a result of students being provided with more

accurate guidance and extra teaching time beyond the curriculum. This is the result of a drive to track progress more rigorously and intervene in learning at the right time. Leaders know there is a long way to go to match the national picture in English and mathematics and they are taking effective action to increase achievement. The significant improvement in attainment in mathematics reported in the last inspection has been sustained and further gains have been made. For example, there was an increase in the number of students gaining grade C in the summer 2011 examinations and Key Stage 2 value added score was in the top 15% nationally.

The quality and impact of teaching from Year 5 to Year 11 is steadily increasing and the proportion of good teaching is greater than it was at the time of the last inspection, although there is much to do before all the teaching is consistently good. Good practice is being shared, for example, within the academy and through links with outstanding providers. More lessons are better organised and closely monitored to provide variety, pace and challenge. The precise learning needs of individual students are being identified and tackled.

Teachers' skills in managing behaviour are improving, and poor behaviour is more swiftly dealt with because new management procedures are more consistently applied. The students said that behaviour at the academy is improving. Progress has been made and the academy recognises there is still some way to go to fully eliminate the low-level disruption by some students in lessons, which limits the progress of others. Boisterous behaviour in open spaces is better managed and students are more punctual to lessons as a result. The academy is introducing extra strategies to increase attendance rates which have yet to make an impact because of other priorities. The academy acknowledges that the impact of the specialism in business and enterprise through innovation has remained the same in the six months since the last inspection and continues to be satisfactory.

The sponsor's statement of action for the academy fulfils the requirements and is fit for purpose. It is making an effective impact and success criteria are clear in the action plan. The Academies Trust has made expertise available in leading and managing improvements and this has contributed effectively to the satisfactory progress made by the academy. The members of the governing body are providing effective support to improve outcomes and the quality of teaching. A new School Improvement Partner starts in January to help the academy move forward with appropriate support through links with partners.

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

Yours sincerely,

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2011

In order to raise standards and hasten the rate of progress students make in their learning, particularly in the middle and upper phases, the academy should:

- Improve the quality and impact of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers always have high expectations of students' capabilities
 - improving the match of teachers' subject knowledge to the subjects they are assigned to teach
 - ensuring teachers plan lessons that include activities with variety and with potential to interest students
 - ensuring teachers make good use of students' individual assessment information when planning lessons so that the learning needs of all students are met
 - taking more account of the individual needs of students once lessons are underway, so that the points students may be struggling with are tackled
 - sharing the good practice clearly evident in the school.

- Improve students' behaviour by:
 - developing teachers' skills in managing students' behaviour so that students are positively engaged and any misbehaviour is swiftly dealt with
 - ensuring that the academy's behaviour management procedures are consistently and fairly applied so that boundaries and expectations of students and staff are clear.

- Develop additional strategies to ensure there is a marked increase in attendance rates and that all students arrive punctually to lessons.