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27 January 2012

Ms J Willis  
The Principal  
Nightingale Academy  
Turin Road  
Enfield  
London  
N9 8DQ

Dear Ms Willis

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Nightingale Academy**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Alan Taylor-Bennett, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 25 and 26 January 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, groups of staff and students, and a representative of the sponsors. Telephone discussions were held with the Chief Executive Officer of the London Academies Enterprise Trust and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed 19 lessons and conducted a series of short visits to lessons. Six lessons were observed jointly with two vice principals, two assistant vice principals and the leaders of English and science.

### **Context**

The academy opened in September 2010 in the accommodation of its predecessor, Turin Grove School. A new Principal was appointed. Most staff transferred to the academy. The academy is currently sponsored by The London Academies Enterprise Trust, which works in partnership with the Greater London Authority (formerly with

the London Development Agency) and the Academies Enterprise Trust. It is a Mayoral Academy with a target of reducing the number of students not in education, employment or training. Its specialist subjects are in English and literacy and sport and active leisure.

There are 932 students on roll, with 125 in the sixth form. The students come from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Most students are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being of Black African heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found nationally. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national figure. The proportion of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs is above average, with an average proportion having a statement of special educational needs. The majority have been identified with moderate learning difficulties and/or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Very high proportions of students enter and leave the academy partway through the academic year.

### **Pupils' achievement**

On entry to the academy, student attainment is significantly below average. This fluctuates between year groups because of the high numbers of students joining partway through their education, many of whom have low levels of literacy and are at the early stages of learning English. In its first year, the academy saw a rise in standards; 42% of students achieved at least five A\* to C grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, a marked increase on the results achieved by the predecessor school. This level of attainment places the academy above the minimum floor standard, but it remains significantly below national figures. As a result of good quality support and guidance, the numbers of students at risk of not moving on to appropriate education, employment and training reduced significantly to 3.6% in 2011, which is well below both the national average and that for London.

A greater proportion of students are making the progress expected in relation to their starting points than previously, which brings the academy broadly into line with the rates of progress expected nationally. Progress is better in mathematics than in English. Girls, students with English as an additional language and Black African students have made better than expected progress from their starting points. Although targeted intervention and individual support have been effective in raising the attainment of students from a low base, poor attendance, high rates of persistent absence and low levels of literacy are significant barriers to achievement. The academy is tackling this legacy of underachievement and recognises that specific groups do not make as much progress as they should, notably students from Black Caribbean, White British, Turkish and Somalian backgrounds. Students with statements of special educational needs and those receiving additional support for special educational needs make less than expected progress.

The academy has recently developed well-focused procedures to track and monitor the students' progress and to guide suitable support and interventions. This is

allowing more accurate and reliable assessment information to be used to set ambitious targets. However, teachers and other adults are not using this information consistently or effectively enough to plan tasks and activities that meet the individual needs of students, especially those with disabilities and those with special educational needs, as well as those at the early stages of learning English.

The small sixth form has increased in numbers. Sixth-form students value the opportunity to continue their post-16 studies at the academy and speak positively of support they receive. Most sixth-form students are making progress that is at least in line with their capabilities.

### **Quality of teaching**

Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 and the sixth form report that a much calmer and more purposeful learning environment has been created since the academy opened and more students want to learn. However, not all students make sufficient progress because the quality of learning varies too much between individual teachers and subjects. Students' experience of learning depends too often on who teaches the lesson. The quality of support and guidance for students with special educational needs is also too variable across the school. Some good teaching and learning were observed, but a greater proportion of lessons was satisfactory and learning was inadequate in a few. The pattern was replicated in lessons that were observed in the sixth form. A large proportion of students have low literacy levels when they enter the school. They do not have the breadth of vocabulary needed to develop their speaking and listening skills sufficiently to contribute well to discussions. This is a key barrier to raising achievement. The best teaching provides opportunities within every lesson to practise and develop these skills, whatever the subject.

Where learning is good, teachers use their subject knowledge to engage students, stimulate their thinking and set specific targets. In these more effective lessons, tasks are varied and interactive and take full account of students' individual learning needs. Effective teaching includes a wide range of ways to assess students' understanding and check their learning at key points throughout the lesson. Where teaching is weaker, learning is held back because teachers set the same work for the whole class so that potentially high-attaining students often find their work too easy. Students with low reading ages, who find it difficult to access the curriculum, and those who have been recently absent find tasks too difficult. The frequency and quality of marking vary considerably across and within subjects. Students report that work completed in class and at home is not marked by some teachers and examples of unmarked work were seen during lesson observations.

### **Behaviour and safety**

Behaviour has improved significantly. The academy meets all requirements for safeguarding children. Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 and the sixth form and members of staff report that a much calmer and more purposeful learning environment has been created since the academy opened. Students from a wide

range of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds get on well together. Behaviour in lessons is at least satisfactory and, where teaching is more effective, students actively engage in their learning. A high staff presence helps to regulate movement around the corridors and supervise time outside lessons. Students respond appropriately to reminders about how to behave and report that they now feel safe in all areas of the school. Permanent exclusions reduced during 2010/11. Levels of fixed-term exclusion remain comparatively high as expectations are being raised. However, incidents of extreme and inappropriate behaviour are reducing.

A key priority for the academy is to increase attendance and reduce the very high levels of persistent absence, including those in the sixth form. Improved systems to monitor and track absence are beginning to make a difference in Years 7 and 8, where attendance is slowly improving. The attendance of students in other year groups remains stubbornly low. The percentages of students who are persistently absent are high and are not reducing quickly enough. This remains a significant challenge for the academy, particularly in ensuring that all teachers and adults appreciate the importance of using good or better teaching and learning to combat the stubbornly high levels of persistent absence.

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

The Principal and senior leadership team communicate clear ambitions and hold high aspirations for students and staff. Self-evaluation is sound and senior leaders understand what is required to address the legacy of low aspirations and underachievement. They have demonstrated the capacity to address weaknesses in key aspects of the academy's work, notably in raising standards, increasing the numbers of students progressing to education, employment and training and creating a positive and safe learning environment. The use of thorough systems to collect data and analyse students' progress is providing a more accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Targeted intervention and support are narrowing the gaps in achievement between different groups of students. However, improvement has not been rapid enough in improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, driving forward the development of literacy and communication skills or reducing persistent absence. These remain areas of significant challenge.

Rigorous systems for monitoring attendance have been slow to have an impact. Students are beginning to respond to some effective teaching and a more relevant curriculum and engage more positively, but this is not yet consistent across all year groups. Teachers are benefiting from an intensive programme of training and professional development. As a result, they are able to use a wider range of strategies, but they do not always select the most appropriate to meet students' wide-ranging needs or adapt their teaching in response to the learning that is taking place. The drive to involve middle leaders fully in monitoring and evaluating performance in their subjects and year groups and to make teachers and tutors accountable for the progress of their students is not embedded sufficiently to eliminate the remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning.

The governing body is suitably well informed about the academy's performance and progress and provides support and challenge. The reputation of the academy is improving in the local community as a result of close collaboration with local partners and a relentless drive to engage parents and carers in supporting students' achievement, behaviour and safety.

### **External support**

The academy requires external support. It is benefiting from the resources, experience and expertise of its partners in The London Academies Enterprise Trust and the Academies Enterprise Trust.

### **Main Judgements**

The academy has made satisfactory progress towards raising standards.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that staff at all levels contribute to reducing persistent absence and improving attendance by providing high-quality teaching and learning and an engaging curriculum.
- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - using assessment data and information about individual needs, especially those students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, to plan and deliver lessons that interest and challenge all groups
  - making it a priority for all teachers and adults to develop students' basic literacy and communication skills across every subject and in every lesson.
- Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders in accelerating performance by ensuring that they:
  - monitor rigorously the quality of marking across, and within, subjects and take decisive action to improve the quality of written feedback
  - hold teachers and tutors to account for the progress of their students
  - evaluate precisely the outcomes of actions taken to increase the achievement of students who are identified as falling behind.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc Chair of the Governing Body  
The Academies Advisers Unit, DfE [ [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk) ]