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Mr David Day  
Principal  
The Isle of Sheppey Academy  
Head Office East Site Minster Road  
Minster-on-Sea  
ME12 3JQ

Dear Mr Day

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of The Isle of Sheppey Academy**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 June 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body and to students on both school sites who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the previous inspection, over 30 new members of staff have been appointed, including newly qualified teachers and five university graduates in English, mathematics and science as part of the Teach First scheme. Construction of the new school buildings on both school sites is well underway with a scheduled completion date in February 2013. Leadership at senior level has been restructured with the creation of key strategic posts: strategic leaders for attainment, curriculum and sixth form, teaching, behaviour and pastoral care, and community, specialism, marketing and vocational education.

As a result of the inspection on 1 December 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 pupils' achievement.

Actions taken to raise students' attainment, from their very low starting points, are starting to demonstrate impact. Data provided by the academy, much of which is based on results already banked, show that students are making gains in their learning and the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics is forecast to exceed the government's floor target. Progress in English and mathematics is accelerating at a steady pace for most groups of students, including for those known to be eligible for free school

meals. Progress for disabled students and those with special educational needs is variable, with students supported at school action plus making progress at a slower rate than those at school action or with a statement of special educational needs. Leaders and managers have taken decisive action to address this through the appointment of a new special educational needs co-ordinator and they plan to raise the profile of this specific group of students by including a compulsory target relating to the performance of students supported at school action plus as part of all teachers' performance management.

The proportion of effective teaching is steadily increasing, and the academy is on track to achieve its own target for the proportion of good or better teaching by September 2012. The academy's commitment to improving the quality of teaching is demonstrated through its participation in the Teach First programme, as well as the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme, which provides corporate training for all teachers on the components of effective teaching. In the four jointly conducted observations of teaching across both school sites, the inspector concurred with senior leaders' judgements. A detailed teaching database has now been set up to record individual teachers' performance across a range of areas, including the use of effective questioning and planning for the learning needs of different groups. This has allowed senior leaders to identify trends in the quality of teaching and to provide support through the sharing of good practice or coaching. A considerable proportion of teaching continues to be satisfactory. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not plan lessons which incorporate activities to suit the needs of different groups of students. Students told the inspector that teaching was improving but they would welcome a greater element of challenge from their teachers.

Visits to a number of lessons where teaching was good or better demonstrated that those teachers who have gained in confidence provide regular opportunities for students to work collaboratively and independently, underpinned by sound systems and procedures for checking their understanding as the lesson progresses. Marking of students' work is regular, and more teachers are providing students with information on what they did well and what could be improved. However, there is no consistency in the way that this is communicated. Consequently, some teachers' comments are more in-depth than others and there is some variation in the quality of guidance. Students' responses to teachers' comments are not monitored.

The academy has made a concerted effort to raise the profile of good behaviour and its correlation with good teaching. Consequently, achievement is steadily rising. The provision of a pastoral management handbook to all staff has ensured that all teachers are aware of the various stages involved in dealing with unacceptable behaviour in lessons. Students report that while some teachers implement the behaviour strategy consistently, others do not. Students told the inspector that the quality of their behaviour is largely dependent on how well the teaching matches their needs. Evidence gathered by the academy shows that reported incidents relating to poor behaviour have declined and the proportion of fixed-term exclusions has reduced over time. Leaders and managers have an improved understanding of

which groups of students demonstrate unacceptable behaviour and why. Consequently, they are able to target their resources towards those students in real need of support. This has coincided with a review of the number of students who are on the special educational needs register at school action plus for behaviour-related issues. A significant proportion have had their level of need scaled down to support at school action. Students' conduct when moving around the school has noticeably improved and their attendance rate has risen to 92%.

The previously submitted statement of action has been suitably amended and is now fit for purpose. Members of the governing body provide an appropriate level of challenge and support. The academy works well with a number of external agencies. An education adviser from the Department for Education (DfE) has worked with the academy to instill high expectations and both the local authority and the DfE have funded the new school buildings. Significant work has been carried out in partnership with Dulwich College through the provision of mathematics revision courses for higher-attaining students. A productive partnership with a local training school has raised the profile of what effective teaching looks like, and is instilling in all teachers a desire to improve on their current practice. The business and enterprise specialism continues to drive innovative projects with the local community, offering rich opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the world of work.

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

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2011**

- Improve students' attainment and progress, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn consistently well in lessons.
  
- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching in line with the academy's own 'improvement mission' targets, so that by September 2012 the large majority of teaching will be good or better, by:
  - ensuring that lessons consistently engage and motivate students, with challenging tasks which develop students' creativity and independence
  - ensuring that tasks are always adapted in lessons to suit the full range of capabilities in the class
  - ensuring that students are given consistently good guidance in teachers' marking about how well they have done and what they need to improve.
  
- Eradicate disruptive behaviour by students in lessons by:
  - securing the consistent implementation by staff in all schools of the academy's behaviour and rewards systems
  - ensuring that students are fully engaged in purposeful, challenging learning.