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14 December 2012

Miss Colette Jones  
Principal  
South Leeds Academy  
Old Run Road  
Leeds  
LS10 2JU

Dear Miss Jones

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of South Leeds Academy**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 13 December 2012, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, members of the governing body, the National Leader of Education and the representative from the academy chain both of whom I met and students with whom I spoke.

Since the last inspection, there have been various staffing changes at senior leadership level. The academy chain is supporting the academy by seconding two senior leaders from other academies. Six new members of teaching staff started in September 2012. There are also three 'Teach First' graduates at the academy, one teaching mathematics, one teaching science and one teaching English.

As a result of the inspection on 2 May 2012, 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.

In 2012 a much higher proportion of students in Year 11 left the academy with five A\*-C grades at GCSE. In addition more students achieved five A\*-C grades including mathematics and English. The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium who achieved five A\*-C grades, including mathematics and English, rose significantly. The gap in the attainment of students supported by the pupil premium and other students in the academy closed in 2012. A significantly higher proportion of students made the expected progress in mathematics in 2012 than in 2011. Although there was a small rise in the proportion of students making expected progress in English, the progress made by students in English is still a concern. Students in Years 8-11 are making much more progress than in previous

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years. In addition, due to the concerted effort to develop literacy skills, students' reading ages are increasing at a faster than national rate.

The new data tracking system allows all staff to monitor the progress the students are making. Staff are more aware of the different needs of the students because of the data available. Data are more frequently collected, reviewed and analysed by senior leaders to check the progress made by students. More data are shared with parents, for example, through the recent Student Review Day.

The quality of teaching is improving. Students are making better progress in a higher proportion of lessons. In these lessons the work given to the students is based on their needs. Group work supports the students to help each other and encourages them to develop their answers. Questioning by the teacher ensures students think about what they are doing and why. There are still lessons in which the students make far less progress. In these lessons, teachers' expectations of what the students can do are too low and the pace of learning is too slow. This can mean some students become distracted and disrupt the learning taking place.

The quality of marking is still highly variable. Some is outstanding, for example in history, where marking clearly states what the students have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. In some areas, for example, mathematics, staff use subject specific language to ensure the students know exactly what they need to do. However, too often marking does not help the students to improve their work. This is because it focuses on the presentation of the work rather than on the content and does not give subject specific guidance for the students. In some books there is very little marking. The senior leadership team is fully aware of these discrepancies and action is being taken.

Attendance since the last inspection has increased and the percentage of students who are persistently absent has decreased. This is because of a highly concerted effort to engage with parents as well as students. The academy is continuing with the programme in place to reduce persistent absence and absence further.

The principal, ably supported by the senior leadership team, is fully aware of the issues in the academy. There is a coordinated plan of action to improve teaching and increase the amount of progress the students make. This plan is sustainable and it focuses on the progress all students make rather than just those students in Year 11. A monitoring schedule is in place. This involves lesson observations, work scrutiny and the collection of data. Members of the senior leadership team are acutely aware of the reasons why students do and do not make progress in lessons. These reasons are fed back clearly to staff. Staff are supported through a range of professional development opportunities, including a weekly teaching and learning briefing. These opportunities are appreciated by the staff and they are considered to be helpful without being overwhelming. Some staff are given extra support through support plans.

External support for the academy is being provided through the academy chain. This includes a National Leader of Education from an outstanding academy mentoring the headteacher. The progress the academy is making is monitored regularly by the academy chain. The support is welcomed by the academy and has increased the capacity of the academy to take the actions needed to improve teaching and the progress students make. The governors are fully aware of the issues especially around the rates of progress some students are making in English. They are supporting the actions being taken by the headteacher and the senior leadership team. The statement of action was judged to be fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Tanya Harber Stuart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2012.**

- Improve students' achievement by:
  - increasing the proportion of good and better teaching and learning to at least two-thirds before the next full inspection
  - improving the quality and consistency of feedback given to students, both in class and on their work
  - improving the quality of data and their use by teachers to plan lessons, and for leaders and managers to monitor improvements
  - improving attendance and reducing the number of persistent absentees so that both are in line with national averages by the end of 2013.