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4 February 2013

Mr Andrew Dyer  
The Principal  
The New Forest Academy  
Long Lane  
Holbury  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO45 2PA

Dear Mr Dyer

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of The New Forest Academy**

Following my visit with Christine Raeside Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on Wednesday 30 to Thursday 31 January 2013, 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 monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, senior staff and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives, and a representative of the sponsors.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

the academy is not making enough progress in raising standards for all students.

### **Context**

The academy, sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), opened in September 2012, following the closure of Hardley School and sixth form. The

academy provides education for students aged 11 to 18 and is located in the same buildings as its predecessor school.

Nearly all of the staff from the predecessor school transferred to the academy. The academy has faced some challenges, including declining numbers of students and difficulties in recruitment to specific posts, for example specialist teachers of English and mathematics. This has led to the school relying on a number of supply teachers, particularly in mathematics.

There are currently 550 students on roll of whom 50 are attending the sixth form. Almost all of the students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is very much smaller than seen nationally. The proportion of disabled students and those who are being supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much lower than the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below average.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Students' standards of attainment on entry to Year 7 in reading, writing and mathematics are at least in line with the national averages. In lessons seen during the inspection, students' work and the academy's analysis of students' achievement information, there are indications that students' progress is beginning to increase. However, it is difficult to gauge the accuracy of the academy's information because the processes for checking students' progress and attainment are not robust enough.

The overall rates of progress, especially in English and mathematics lessons, vary between teachers, resulting in a very uneven pattern of achievement overall. During lessons observed by inspectors, students made inconsistent progress, especially in mathematics. Some lessons contributed well to supporting students making at least the progress expected given their starting points. This over reliance on the teaching quality of individual teachers was reflected in the views of groups of students who met with an inspector.

The reliability of teachers' assessment is not secure because of infrequent marking in some subjects and the school is over reliant on formal assessments. Although these suggest improvement, it is not fast enough or consistent across all groups. Less-able students, disabled students and those with special educational needs make limited progress. Consequently, the gap between their attainment and their peers is not narrowing.

### **The quality of teaching**

The proportion of lessons that are well taught has increased since the academy opened. However, not enough teaching secures the rates of progress most students are capable of. Much of the better teaching is consistently seen in non-core subjects

including history, geography and physical education. In English, there is some improvement but dependent on individual teachers. The temporary nature of many of the mathematics teachers leads to a considerable variety in the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching is too varied in science and although some is highly effective and stimulating senior leaders are addressing weaknesses through formal procedures

In the best teaching, teachers plan lessons well and use their knowledge of students' prior learning and assessment information effectively to make sure activities meet the needs of different abilities. They ask searching questions throughout the lesson and give students clear information about how to make progress to the next level or grade. Practical activities spark interest and enjoyment in students. As a result, students have the confidence and skills to become less reliant on the teacher; learning more quickly and working together well. This was seen in a Year 10 biology lesson where students were building models of DNA. However, there are too many lessons where this is not the case. Teachers were seen providing the same activity to all the students in the class regardless of what they were capable of. Low-ability students are not always provided with the appropriate resources to help them, and more-able students are not challenged enough. Students' work is marked infrequently and in some cases not at all.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is a strength of the academy. The students behave well towards each other and respond positively to instructions from staff. During lessons, students demonstrate interest and are willing to take part in a range of learning activities. Only when lessons are uninteresting or lack challenge do students display any mild forms of restlessness. Attendance is increasing and generally average. There have been no permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions are low.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

From the time the academy opened, the Principal and senior leaders have faced some challenging aspects in terms of recruiting permanent specialist teachers, particularly in mathematics. In addition, the numbers on roll are currently declining because the numbers of families with secondary aged-children in the area are decreasing. Indications are that these figures are set to stabilise in the future.

The senior leadership team has a broadly accurate view of the academy's strengths and weakness and the plans for improvement generally reflect these. There is a lack of a concerted approach to improvement amongst the leadership team. This results in different leaders working independently of each other and not sufficiently coordinating their efforts for the good of the academy. This can be seen in the key improvement plans, which do not clarify how links are made between the activities of different senior leaders and middle managers and the measurable outcomes for students. In addition, the lack of urgency to improve can be seen in timescales which are not tight enough to bring about rapid improvement and hold staff

responsible to account. Although lessons are observed by senior leaders and feedback is provided to teachers, not enough rigour is involved in making sure there are well-embedded and consistent practices. For example, inconsistencies are evident in the marking of students' work, providing appropriate learning resources and using assessment information to provide students with work that matches their needs and abilities.

The leadership of the support for disabled students and those with special educational needs is of particular concern. Although appropriate measures are beginning to be taken, most of the students identified as requiring additional support are not making enough progress.

The governing body carries out its statutory functions and arrangements for safeguarding students meet current requirements. Challenging questions are asked during meetings, but senior leaders are not held to account robustly enough to bring about the rapid changes necessary to ensure the academy improves at a faster rate than at present. For example, the analysis and reporting to governors of the quality of teaching have led them to have a more positive picture than is actually the case.

### **External support**

The regional director of AET has an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and weakness and knows what needs to be done to make further improvements. A wide range of support for the subject leaders is beginning to improve subject specialism and leadership, especially in English and mathematics. However, the temporary nature of contracts and lack of permanent, specialist staff in mathematics are hindering the deepening of overall quality. There have been regular meetings with the Principal and Chair of the Governing Body to check on the academy's progress.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure all students make the best progress they can, given their capabilities and starting points.
- Eradicate all ineffective teaching and ensure levels of progress are securely underpinned by consistently well-taught lessons.
- Ensure all leaders and managers, including the governing body, are checking that the information used to monitor teaching is regular, accurate and robust.
- Ensure all plans for improvement have regular milestones linked to clear and measurable academic outcomes and hold appropriate leaders to account.

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

Yours sincerely

John Seal  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**