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14 February 2013

Mr James Fox  
Interim Principal  
Portslade Aldridge Community Academy  
Chalky Road  
Portslade  
Brighton  
BN41 2WS

Dear Mr Fox

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Portslade Aldridge Community Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 13 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you as interim principal, with your senior vice principal, with members of the Governing Body and with students from Years 10 and 12. The academy's improvement plans and proposals for the restructuring of leadership and management were evaluated and minutes of post-inspection governors' meetings reviewed.

### **Context**

Significant changes since the last section 5 inspection include the appointment of:

- the interim principal
- an interim vice principal responsible for the sixth form
- an interim director of study for English
- a new Education Director
- a new Academic Partner

In addition, there have been changes in the line management of the academy's Fresh Start Centre and in its support for students with disabilities or special educational needs.

## **Main findings**

The academy's governing body is chaired by a representative of the chief sponsor, and has local authority and higher education representation as well as staff and parent governors. It has responded promptly and vigorously to the issues highlighted at the last inspection. The improvement action plan is clearly organised, using the four main inspection areas – achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management. In each area, appropriate and practical priorities have been established, and a manageable time-scale set out. At present, there is no clear distinction between who is to undertake each line of action, who is to monitor its implementation and who is to evaluate its impact. It will be difficult for the academy's leaders and governors to be incisive in judging the effectiveness of each initiative since the measures of success are too generalised. There is considerable overlap between the section dealing with students' quality of learning and achievement and that concerned with teaching. In each case, the section lacks sharpness of focus and reference to specific aspects; for example, which elements of students' learning need most concentrated intervention and which particular aspects of teaching and assessment need to be more effective.

With strong support from the governors, you and a team of senior leaders are acting quickly to meet the expectations set out in the last inspection report. Plans for changes to the structure of leadership and management are under review, designed to establish greater clarity about roles and accountability and to avoid duplication. In addition to changes referred to above, plans are well advanced to improve the curriculum for each key stage. Sixth form options for the current Year 11 are being more carefully tied to students' individual aptitudes and aspirations. The academy recognises the need to ensure that students' courses match the subject requirements for entry to their intended higher and further education, training and employment. More systematic analysis of information about students' knowledge, skills and progress is being developed to guide students through their transition from primary school into Key Stage 3, on into Key Stage 4 and, when appropriate, into the sixth form. As students themselves report, behaviour has improved and expectations are more demanding. All of these initiatives are in their early stages so it is not yet possible to evaluate their impact and sustainability.

In summary: senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to ensure that:

- the development plan is precise in its identification of priorities and targets and sets out clearly who is to be responsible in the first instance for implementing actions, who will monitor that implementation and who will evaluate its impact
- roles and responsibilities at each level of leadership and management are clearly defined and rigorous systems for monitoring their effectiveness established
- actions described in the development plan to support better achievement, especially in core subjects, and good or better teaching overall are consistently implemented and monitored.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The academy is well supported by its sponsors – the Aldridge Foundation, the local authority and the University of Sussex. Interventions include advice and monitoring by those with extensive experience of teaching and learning, and guidance through improvement planning and financial management by those with relevant professional experience.

To strengthen the implementation of the school's action plan, the likely pattern of further Ofsted intervention will include:

- lesson observations and feedback to teachers
- contribution to staff training, with a particular focus on matching expectations and activities to pupils' differing abilities and ways of learning and on strengthening leadership and management at all levels.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**