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2 May 2013

Catherine Spillane  
Principal  
The Thetford Academy  
Croxtton Road  
Thetford  
IP24 1LH

Dear Mrs Spillane

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Thetford Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 1 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 12 February 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the principal, the Vice Chair and Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair of the Governing Body is also a representative of the sponsors. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

There have been no significant changes since the last inspection.

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

Leaders and the board of governors have pressed on with the challenge of making improvements. Students interviewed during this inspection spoke positively about the impact of expectations set out for their behaviour in lessons and around the site. Consequently, there are fewer interruptions to learning due to inappropriate behaviour in lessons. Staff are receiving training and professional development to improve their teaching and management of students' behaviour, based on evidence

gathered by senior leaders' direct observations. Students and leaders report a greater consistency in the setting of learning objectives and checking learning against these, during and at the end of lessons. Governors have restructured their committees and are soon to receive training in understanding and using performance data to hold the academy to account. More effort is being made to engage parents so that the academy can be successful. The sponsors have provided some external support to help resolve longstanding staffing issues. This is giving the Principal more time to focus on raising students' achievement.

Academy leaders and the governing board have formulated an improvement plan to tackle key issues arising from the last inspection. The sponsors have also drawn up a statement of action to secure improvement. The statement of action is not detailed enough and is insufficiently linked to the improvement plan. The statement identifies some key actions, such as the setting up of a monitoring group, but the lack of measurable success criteria runs the risk of preventing the group from clearly evaluating the impact of actions.

The academy improvement plan includes a reference to all of the areas identified in the last inspection. Although the plan includes key actions that are the right things to be doing, it lacks the detail necessary for checking how well actions are leading to improvement. There is no clear separation between those taking the action, those monitoring, and those evaluating whether the actions are working well or not. Some of the actions have appropriate timings but there are very few clear 'milestones' to check whether progress is good enough. The improvement plan includes measurable criteria for students' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance but does not include targets for the end of the academic year. The proportion of students capable of making better than expected progress has not been identified in the plan.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**