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11 June 2013

Mike Conn  
Executive Principal  
Bexhill High School  
Down Road  
Bexhill-on-Sea  
TN39 4BY

Dear Mr Conn

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Bexhill High School**

Following my visit to your academy on 10 June 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 and other staff gave during the inspection and for the time 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 in February 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, representatives of the interim academic board and the academy sponsor, Prospects Academies Trust. I evaluated the combined sponsor statement of action and academy improvement plan, made short visits to lessons and checked the single central record of employment checks on staff and other adults.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, an associate-Principal has been appointed by the sponsor on a one-year contract to support senior leaders. A project manager has also been appointed for a year to oversee a range of additional support to be provided for the academy. Two staff have been promoted to vice-Principal roles. Two new vice-Principals have been appointed, one to start at the end of June as operational Head of School, and another joins in September. Both are on one-year

contracts. The governing body has been replaced by an interim academic board, on which four of the previous governors serve under the leadership of a Chair appointed by the sponsor. A parents' action group has been formed.

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

The external appointments to support senior leaders bring relevant experience of improving schools in Ofsted categories of concern. In their short time in post, they have energetically set about building the capacity of academy leaders to improve provision, and their understanding of the scale of the task to turn teaching around. Together with existing leaders, they are sustaining staff morale well, while at the same time raising expectations. The improvement plan acknowledges all the weaknesses in teaching, assessment and leadership identified in the inspection, and sets challenging overall targets for pupils' achievement. A number of other external reviews have also helped clarify for leaders what needs to change. Work is underway to improve key areas such as making sure assessment and tracking information accurately records students' attainment, and teachers' classroom practice. However, the action plan gives insufficient emphasis to improving the teaching of large groups of students over extended periods in large spaces, which is the model commonly used in the academy. Equally, it does not include clear enough long-term targets for different groups of students, such as those in receipt of pupil premium funding, to focus all staff on closing the considerable gap between their attainment and other students.

Prompt action from the sponsor to improve governance led to the establishment of the interim academic board. Via meetings and visits which are more regular than from the previous governing body, the board is challenging leaders more effectively over the impact of work to improve teaching. They are beginning to sharpen staff accountability for student progress, for example checking as senior leaders draft new job specifications for staff. They are determined to hold the academy to account. Appointments to the board, such as the Chair, are working well alongside previous governors to develop their skills. They rightly pay close attention to the improvement plan, although this has too few measurable indicators of progress toward overall targets. These are needed for them to be sure the senior leaders, who report to the board, are moving the academy forward at a pace. Greater clarity is also required about how the interim academic board will be developed into a full governing body over the longer term. The establishment of the parents' action group offers the potential to engage them more effectively in work to improve the academy.

Following the monitoring inspection, these judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is not fit for purpose and will be evaluated again on the next monitoring inspection next term after adjustments have been made.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers at this time. I will review this decision again at the next monitoring visit.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Academic Board and the local authority for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**