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19 June 2013

Ms Liz King  
Acting Principal  
Chaucer Technology School  
Spring Lane  
Canterbury  
CT1 1SU

Dear Ms King

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer Technology School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, two governors, a representative from the local authority and other members of your senior team. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action, your school improvement plan and other documentation, such as the latest estimates of pupils' achievement and reviews of the quality of teaching. The acting vice-principal also accompanied me on a tour of the school, enabling me to visit a few lessons.

### **Context**

The previous principal left his position just prior to the section 5 inspection which placed the school in special measures. Governors consequently appointed you from your substantive role as vice-principal to that of acting principal. You have made no new teaching appointments since this time. However, a considerable number of staff will be leaving at the end of this term as a result of budgetary enforced re-structuring.

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

Since taking up the acting position, you have identified a significant shortfall in the budget, necessitating sizeable cuts to the composition of the senior team and to the numbers of teachers employed at the school. Governors were unaware of the projected shortfall, consequently most of your time since the inspection has been spent on re-structuring proposals, consultations with staff and producing a budgetary recovery plan for governors and the local authority. As a result, although some progress has been made to address the key issues for improvement identified at the previous inspection, not enough has been achieved and some significant barriers remain unresolved.

Positive actions to bring about improvement include:

- a clear and consistent approach to the presentation and collection of assessment information, now in the form of a 'data dashboard' so that it is accessible and easy for governors and parents to interpret
- effective use of early entry and other support strategies for students to ensure that the achievement of Year 11 students in 2013 will improve when compared with the previous year
- extra meetings with parents to keep them informed and hear their concerns
- well-targeted support to develop teachers skills and expertise which through monitoring and external review, indicates that teaching is improving
- effective monitoring and action taken to improve attendance to a level that is now closer to the national average.

However, proposals initiated by governors before the inspection to become a sponsored academy have stalled, owing to the sizeable budgetary deficit. Despite having secured a sponsor, the academy order has yet to be signed and it is unlikely that the target date of December 2013 will be met. This is because the local authority, the proposed sponsors, the Department for Education and governors have yet to agree on how the deficit will be fully eradicated. In the meantime, four out of the five new senior posts within the school, including that of principal are temporary.

Governors recognise that they have been negligent in their monitoring duties and now wish to strengthen their influence, knowledge and expertise. To this end they have sought an external review of governance from the local authority. This has not been prioritised by the local authority and no date has been offered. Leaders are still waiting to know if the local authority intends to establish an Interim Executive Board to assume responsibility for the finances and leadership of the school. The local authority's lack of urgency in this matter is unacceptable.

You have put together an action plan which addresses each of the key areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. However, there are insufficient

measures of success and many of the actions identified are being monitored and led by the same person. Too much of the plan focuses on the re-structuring and not enough emphasis is placed on providing the necessary training to equip newly appointed leaders to take effective action to improve teaching and achievement. The target date of December 2013 for the appointment of a substantive principal is too late and no target date has been identified for the appointment to three out of the four substantive assistant and vice-principal posts.

The local authority has failed to support governors and the acting principal effectively. The local authority statement of action provides no clear indication of actions, timelines or milestones and does not reference the points for improvement arising from the previous inspection. Unreasonable demands have been made of the acting principal in respect of the budgetary deficit, who in turn has been unable to assert sufficient influence to move matters forward. This has resulted in her spending a disproportionate amount of her time attempting to resolve an intractable problem, which now needs to be urgently addressed by officers of the local authority, the Department for Education and the proposed sponsors so as to secure the necessary rapid improvements to which students within the school are entitled.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the DfE Academies Advisers Unit, as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**