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27 June 2013

Ruth Lyons  
Headteacher  
Shafton Primary Academy  
High Street  
Barnsley  
S72 8QA

Dear Mrs Lyons

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Shafton Primary School**

Following my visit with Marianne Young, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 25–26 June 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 headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, a representative of the governing body, and the Regional Director of Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

### **Context**

Shafton Primary Academy opened in December 2012 following the closure of its predecessor school, Shafton Primary School, which was placed in special measures when it was inspected in November 2011. The predecessor school was monitored in November 2012 and was judged to be making good progress.

The academy is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust. Staff from the

predecessor school transferred to the academy. The headteacher was the headteacher of the predecessor school. A teacher left his post in April 2013 and has been re-employed in an administrative role. An assistant headteacher has recently been appointed and taken up post. One class has a temporary teacher for the current half term. There is a new Chair of the Governing Body and some governors are new; others were governors previously. All are parents of pupils currently at the school.

In June 2013, the headteacher took on the additional role of leading another local academy. This half-time commitment was proposed by the sponsor and agreed by the governors. The length of this appointment is subject to review.

The academy is of average size and most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. The percentage supported at school action is below average.

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

Teacher assessment shows that the academy met its July 2013 target to reach the 2012 national averages for attainment at the end Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.

In 2013, at the end of Key Stage 1, attainment in reading and writing was higher than in 2012 and similar to 2011, when it was above average. Attainment in mathematics in Year 2 is markedly higher than it has been in previous years. As a result of more effective teaching of letters and sounds, and better test preparation, a much higher proportion of pupils in Year 1 met the required standard in this year's national screening test than in 2012.

At the end of Key Stage 2, teacher assessments of reading and writing show that a higher proportion of pupils gained Level 5, compared with 2012. In mathematics, the proportions attaining both Level 4 and Level 5 are higher. The percentages of pupils making and exceeding the progress expected from Key Stage 1 have increased, especially in writing and mathematics. The outcomes of the Key Stage 2 tests are not yet published. Teacher assessments show that pupils in all years are on track to make at least the nationally expected amount of progress.

Recent assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage indicate that most children are on track to meet the early learning goals and a few are likely to exceed them. In recent years there has been a wide gap between boys and girls on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage and although boys progress well the gap remains at the beginning of Key Stage 1.

Pupils are working with greater purpose and achieving more success by taking well-defined short steps over a sequence of lessons. They enjoy the more engaging topic work.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has continued to improve. However, teaching in Year 5 has not been as good as in other years, and recent staff changes mean that teaching in Year 6 is not as strong as it was. The very recently-appointed teachers who have taken on these roles have not yet established themselves.

Across the academy, the use of learning objectives has become more precise and pupils have a better grasp of the steps they are taking to learn new skills in English and mathematics. Paired talk regularly gives pupils opportunities to participate and express their thoughts at the beginning of lessons. Pupils quickly get involved in well-planned tasks pitched at their different levels. Targets are expressed in language pupils understand and the clear guidance in books and on tables provides strong direction for individuals and for tasks.

The teachers' modelling of what pupils are expected to write enables them to tackle tasks purposefully and with greater accuracy. Pupils are developing a better understanding of sentence structures and grammatical devices and they are applying these skills in independent and extended writing. Changes to the planning of guided reading have resulted in a better-planned cycle of activities. Further refinement is needed to ensure that lower-ability groups working independently always have a practical task to complete.

In mathematics, pupils are better motivated by the precise targets, clear explanations and regular opportunities to carry out practical tasks. Opportunities for pupils to work out their own solutions to problems are less frequent. Leaders have accurately identified a need to link mental mathematics activities at the beginning of a lesson more closely to the main part of the lesson. Teaching assistants are generally effective in leading small group work through well-directed questioning and explanation.

Marking is usually linked to the objectives for the piece of work and frequently provides specific praise and targets for the next steps in learning. The best marking is personal and encourages pupils to respond. However, pupils do not have enough regular opportunities to respond to marking by answering questions or correcting work, including spelling. Pupils carry out assessment of their own and other pupils work but opportunities to do so are sometimes missed.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Since the academy opened, improving behaviour has continued to have a high priority in leaders' drive to raise standards. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour both in classrooms and around the academy has improved. Pupils' behaviour, seen by inspectors, is generally calm and orderly with a consistent approach from staff if pupils step out of line. Pupils say that inappropriate behaviour does still occur at times, but they are confident that it will be dealt with swiftly. The very recent

introduction of 'behaviour watch' is popular and gives staff an electronic record of how pupils are behaving and who has received commendations for doing well. Inspectors saw very little off-task behaviour in lessons and when it does occur it is mainly due to weak teaching which does not fully engage pupils in their learning. Pupils work well as part of a group or in pairs. Collaborative work is effective in the afternoon activities when pupils work on a series of tasks from different subjects. Pupils' positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their improving progress.

Pupils' attendance is closely monitored but the picture has only improved marginally this year. However, because of the improved communication with parents and the emphasis placed on regular attendance, older pupils particularly, are coming to school regularly. Leaders counsel pupils with poor attendance, and their parents. To date, there have been some improvements, but there is more work to do.

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

The academy has continued to implement the improvement plan of the predecessor school and teacher assessment indicates that the academy has met the achievement targets set for July 2013. With strong and purposeful leadership from the headteacher, the well-structured approach to teaching and learning has been consolidated. The systematic approach to developing and applying skills in writing has developed pupils' stamina for extended writing and accelerated the progress made by all abilities. In mathematics, effective planning to increase the progress of different abilities has improved attainment.

Evaluation of actions is regular, systematic and reflective and leads to well-targeted action. Coaching by the deputy headteacher has improved the quality of teaching. Teachers' observations of each other's lessons and weekly staff development sessions have helped to share and embed good practice. The recently appointed assistant headteacher has begun to make a useful contribution. Improved leadership and more flexible provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage have contributed to improved achievement. Leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is at an early stage of development. Teachers with other subject responsibilities are beginning to monitor and evaluate their subjects and offer support to others.

The use of topics to engage pupils in learning and to link subject work with literacy and numeracy has become better organised, resulting in more enjoyable learning. The academy has rightly prioritised further development of the curriculum to extend pupils' experience, interests and skills.

The governing body has met regularly to consider the progress of the academy. Governors are well informed by data analysis and evaluation by senior leaders. Governors have been fully involved in decisions about staffing and take a strong interest in the quality and measures of teacher performance. The governing body offers a good range of skill and experience to support and challenge the academy.

The governing body would rightly like to add governors who are not parents in order to increase the objectivity of the governing body. The governing body has two vacancies. Recent parental and pupil questionnaires show positive attitudes to the academy. The new arrangement for the headteacher to support another school is subject to review by the sponsor and governors and a commitment has been given to change the arrangement at any sign of slippage.

### **External support**

The sponsor provides good financial, administrative and legal support. The academy is in the process of adopting the sponsor's systems for planning and accountability. A consultant has recently begun useful work to further develop mathematics. Advice on information and communication technology for learning has been helpful. The locally-based Regional Director of Education has regular formal and informal meetings with the headteacher to monitor progress. As a result of joining the academy chain, the headteacher has taken on the role of supporting the leadership of a local academy. At the same time, an assistant headteacher from another trust academy has recently joined the academy to strengthen the senior leadership.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Continue to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that new teachers are well supported to provide good teaching in Years 5 and 6.
- Further improve marking by providing pupils with more regular opportunities to respond and correct their work, and to carry out self- and peer-assessment.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to ensure that the curriculum develops pupils' wider thinking and personal skills and their ability to tackle problems.
- Monitor the new leadership arrangements to ensure that the performance of the academy continues to improve.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, 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

Bernard Campbell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**