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30 September 2013

Mrs Sue Hare (Executive Principal)  
Headteacher  
Eston Park Academy  
Burns Road  
Middlesbrough  
Cleveland  
TS6 9AW

Dear Mrs Hare

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Eston Park Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 27 September 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 in May 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Executive Principal, vice-principal/head of academy and two representatives of the sponsor. A discussion was also held with an academy improvement adviser appointed by the sponsor. At the time of the monitoring inspection it was not possible to meet with members of the governing body due to prior commitments. However, governing body minutes were scrutinised. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

Eston Park is due to amalgamate with the neighbouring Gillbrook Academy in September 2014. There is a joint governing body in place to prepare for the amalgamation. A new Executive Principal commenced at the beginning of September 2013 to oversee the implementation of the academy improvement plan. This is a one year appointment. The governing body has appointed a substantive Principal with effect from January 2014 and who will be the Principal designate for the new academy in readiness for the following September. A number of experienced staff have been deployed to the academy to strengthen the senior leadership team.

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

Given that the Executive Principal has been in post since the beginning of the academic year only she has lost no time in beginning to address the improvements identified at the time of the previous inspection. She has brought a sense of rigour and focused determination to improve teaching and learning and raise achievement. However, much work remains to be done and the impact of recent initiatives on students' achievement has yet to be realised. The percentage of students attaining five A\* to C including English and mathematics rose considerably during 2012/13. However, this should not mislead staff, governors and parents to believe that all is well. Certainly senior leaders do not take this view and they are right to do so. This increase in attainment was achieved as a result of late-targeted intervention, particularly in English and mathematics. It should not conceal the fact that students are still not making sufficient progress in most subjects as they move through the academy because elements of leadership and management in respect of the quality of teaching and learning are not good enough.

The senior leadership team members now have well-defined management responsibilities and are being held accountable for their actions. Heads of faculties are receiving support to ensure that they are better placed to check and evaluate the quality of teaching and to make a greater contribution to driving improvement. Prior to the arrival of the Executive Principal there was no effective performance-management system in place. This has been a priority for both the senior leadership team and the governing body and, consequently, plans are in hand for performance management for all staff to be in place by the end of October 2013. These developments represent a significant step forward in leadership and management.

The governing body has been involved in the formulation of the improvement plan and the Chair of the Governing Body has regular meetings with the Executive Principal to review progress. Governors visit regularly to see the work of the academy at first hand. The minutes of governing body meetings indicate that governors are developing their ability to challenge more effectively. This is mainly because they are now better informed about what is going on especially in relation to students' achievement.

The sponsor has acted swiftly, facilitating a range of support including the secondment of senior leaders and the appointment of an improvement adviser to improve teaching. This action has strengthened the capacity of leaders and managers to take the academy forward in the short term. However, underlying weaknesses remain and without this support progress would be less evident.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**