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Andrew Salter  
Principal  
Felixstowe Academy  
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Maidstone Road  
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Suffolk  
IP11 9EF

Dear Mr Salter

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Felixstowe Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 14 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- Ensure that all lessons, especially those at Key Stage 3, are pitched at a level that challenges all students present so that those who are lagging behind catch up.
- Set and monitor staff performance management targets for progress of individual classes and groups at Key Stage 3, giving students a good foundation to progress onto GCSEs.
- Ensure that governors' records of meetings are written in such a way that challenges are recorded in detail, and that targets are precise so that progress towards them can be easily monitored.
- Ensure that students are routinely given opportunities to develop skills of independent learning and problem solving, especially in Key Stage 3.

## Evidence

I visited six Key Stage 3 lessons with your deputy in order to evaluate learning. In addition, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, a representative from the academy sponsor, and two governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy improvement plans and records of assessment were also evaluated.

## Main findings

Since the last inspection the results of the academy's 2013 GCSE and 'A' level examinations have been released. These show a small decline in GCSE pass rates over the previous year although performance remained above the government's minimum floor standards. Students achieved well in science. Overall, results for 'A' levels improved. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls is narrowing.

At Key Stage 3, the academy's own data show a mixed picture across year groups and subjects. Broadly, students make progress that is around average in this key stage. However, because they enter the academy with low prior attainment this is not enough for them to succeed well enough at Key Stage 4. However students are slow to develop skills of independent learning because they are not systematically given opportunities to develop them in class. We observed some lessons where the teaching did not challenge all students present. In two very successful lessons however the teachers pitched the level high enough to challenge all, but at the same time skilfully assessed who was following and who was stuck. Help was provided to ensure that those who had misunderstood kept up with the rest of the class so that all made good progress.

Teachers have undertaken much professional development to improve their teaching. They regularly observe other teachers across the two sites of the academy, so that good practice is shared. Assessment is now carried out systematically. Teachers have a good idea how well students are doing, and these data also give the academy a good indication of the progress of different groups and individuals. This assessment is broadly accurate at Key Stage 3, though overgenerous at the higher levels.

Managers observe teaching thoroughly. Systems used are complex, but do give a generally accurate view of teaching. You recognise that sometimes issues, such as pitching work at too low a level, have not been picked up. You have started to tackle this by ensuring that the academy now places an appropriate emphasis on the learning of students rather than the activities of teachers.

You and your deputies have a good understanding of the weaknesses of the academy. The post-inspection action plan is clear and concise with targets that are precise and measurable. Good steps are being taken to increase the accountability of

teachers for the performance of their students, although this does not consistently extend to Key Stage 3. Despite the dip in exam results in 2013, teaching is improving. Middle leaders have undertaken various professional development sessions aimed at improving their management skills, for example on the management of accountability and performance. Much work has been undertaken, for example, to improve and monitor marking and its use as an improvement tool.

Governors bring considerable expertise and relevant skills to their role. They now hold you and other leaders to account and ask challenging questions that are clearly recorded in records of meetings. Sometimes however these notes lack enough precision to allow progress towards targets to be effectively monitored

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The academy has received much support from the sponsors, notably in aspects of literacy, numeracy, performance management and continuous professional development.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**