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18 December 2013

Martin Coulson  
The Bromfords School  
Grange Avenue  
Wickford  
SS12 0LZ

Dear Mr Coulson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Bromfords School**

Following my visit with Chris Moodie HMI to your academy on 17 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of our visit. Thank you for the help you gave us and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection and since the last monitoring visit in September 2013.

The visit was the second 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 and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The academy should take immediate action to:

- ensure all teachers consistently apply the academy's behaviour policy
- raise the expectations of all teachers for all groups of students.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, students, representatives of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and the two external consultants working in the academy, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy's improvement plan was re-evaluated. Inspectors made short visits to 20 lessons, scrutinised documents relating to safety and behaviour, looked at the academy's records of monitoring activity and observed the behaviour around the academy at break and lunchtime.

## **Context**

Since the last visit, the headteacher has left the academy in order to pursue opportunities elsewhere. Two external consultants are supporting the leadership team, one for one day and one for two days per week.

## **Main findings**

Governors have undertaken training on a wide range of issues that relate to their work and are now very clear on what needs to happen, if the academy is to meet its targets for the year and beyond. The committee structure includes a chair's action group, which holds very regular weekly meetings and they have written new terms of reference for the other committees. A thorough review of the performance of the governing body has taken place. As a result, a comprehensive status report has formed the basis for the governors' own action plan. They now have good understanding and skills to challenge and support the academy.

These and other changes are recent and the impact is not yet evident. The leadership of teaching has improved, because leaders understand how to gather and analyse evidence of the quality of teaching over time, rather than basing judgements on a narrow range of observations. The quality of teaching varies too much at present and not enough is good or better. Marking has improved.

Attendance has improved this year but persistent absence is still too high. Exclusions have fallen, but the number is still above average. Some students have poor attitudes to learning and at times, this disrupts the lesson. This disruption occurs mainly in lower ability sets. Around the academy, behaviour is orderly and safe, but inappropriate name-calling and occasional open defiance occur. Students say that bullying is dealt with when it occurs and the parents whose responses appear on Parent View confirm that they feel the academy keeps children safe.

Achievement has improved slightly in the 2013 examination results. Current data shows the improvement is continuing. However, progress for lower and middle ability students is not good enough. The gap between the progress made by the majority of students and others, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs remains too wide.

The sixth form is improving at a more rapid pace. Students in the sixth form say they have better advice and guidance on which courses to choose, but retention from Year 12 into Year 13 is still below average.

The academy has addressed the requirements set at the last monitoring visit. The action plans contain clear priorities and milestones. Self-evaluation is more accurate and increasingly focuses on outcomes for students.

HMI will return to the academy in the spring term to carry out a further monitoring visit.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to support and challenge the academy effectively through providing high levels of challenge and support for leaders, especially the governing body. Governors have benefitted from training on the use of data and how to judge the quality of the academy's work using the Ofsted framework. A wide range of additional activities have also taken place that are starting to strengthen leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Elaine Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**