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20 January 2014

Mr Ian Flintoff  
Headteacher  
Alde Valley School  
Seaward Avenue  
Leiston  
IP16 4BG

Dear Mr Flintoff

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Alde Valley School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher responsible for mathematics, four members of the governing body including the Chair, and a representative of the local authority. I visited a small number of lessons accompanied by you to look at the teaching of English, mathematics, science and French. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, plans for the school to become an academy from 1 February 2014 have been delayed.

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

Your school action plan rightly identifies students' achievement in mathematics as a key priority. You have wisely focused on challenging students' low aspirations of

themselves and teachers' low expectations of what students can achieve in the subject. You have appointed a new leader of mathematics who has revised the school's systems for assessment and is working to build capacity within the mathematics team. However, your current information on students' progress in Year 11 in mathematics indicates that their progress is not accelerating at a quick enough pace, and that you may need to review your targets and the strategies in place to achieve these.

You have increased staff's awareness of the performance of different groups of students in the school, including those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs. Your work with the 61 identified students in Year 11 who may underachieve involves more closely targeted support and intervention. You are providing more support and challenge for those teachers whose teaching is not yet good. This involves the use of coaching and sending them to other schools where teaching is proven to be highly effective.

Students' attendance at the school is improving. You have successfully reduced the proportion of students who are excluded from school for a fixed-term period, but the proportion of students who are persistently absent remains too high.

Governors have started to ask challenging questions following the previous inspection, and their visits are more closely focused on securing school improvement. Some but not all of their notes of visit provide strong evidence that they are asking subject leaders key questions about how they plan to improve their team's performance. The review of governance recommended in the previous inspection is yet to take place.

The school's relationship with the local authority is improving and governors welcome their support in strengthening the governance of the school. The local authority has set up appropriate systems for monitoring the school's progress against both its own action plan and the local authority's statement of action. The local authority has provided useful support for those students who have special educational needs. You appreciate the importance of the role of the local authority's mathematics adviser in helping you to secure improved outcomes in this subject. You aim to work more closely with her in monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the provision of mathematics in the school, which will be informed through observations of mathematics teaching.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is fit for purpose, but the targets and action planning for outcomes in mathematics should be reviewed.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**