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5 March 2014

Dr Rory Fox  
Interim Principal  
Ryde Academy  
Pell Lane  
Ryde  
PO33 3LN

Dear Dr Fox

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Ryde Academy**

Following my visit to the academy on 3 and 4 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you, your staff and students made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Isle of Wight, the Education Funding Agency, and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013**

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in all subjects in order to raise achievement, by:
  - ensuring that all staff receive high-quality training that meets their individual needs
  - developing teachers' skills so they feel confident in teaching literacy, particularly writing
  - having high expectations of students' achievement and providing lessons that are briskly paced, interesting and allow students to spend more time doing and less time listening
  - making sure teachers use assessment information to match work to individual students' needs
  - making sure teachers demand high standards of presentation so that students take pride in their work.
  
- Improve confidence in systems for managing behaviour, by:
  - reviewing the behaviour and the anti-bullying policies, and taking the views of staff and students into account
  - creating an atmosphere of trust with students so they all feel confident in reporting bullying
  - implementing the reviewed policies and ensuring that all staff apply them consistently.
  
- The academy's leaders need to accelerate the pace of change and focus sharply on raising achievement in all subjects, by:
  - producing action plans that are clearly linked to thorough and accurate self-evaluation and have precise, measurable and ambitious targets, with clear procedures and timescales for evaluating the impact of actions taken
  - providing succinct and appropriate information for the governing body about all aspects of the academy's work.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 March 2014**

### **Evidence**

I met with you, senior and middle leaders, and seven members of the governing body. I also met a representative from the academy's sponsor, Academies Enterprise Trust. I talked to students in lessons and met with 24 students from Years 7 and 8. I also talked to a small group of parents and carers. I observed parts of five lessons jointly with senior leaders and observed them giving feedback to teachers. I conducted a learning walk, visiting 17 classrooms briefly. In addition, I observed parts of several 'Drop Everything and Read' sessions. I reviewed information about students' achievement, behaviour and attendance. I also scrutinised the academy's self-evaluation documents and development plan. This visit focused on behaviour and the impact of leaders' actions on improving teaching and students' achievement.

### **Context**

Since January, the Executive Principal has taken on the role of Interim Principal for the foreseeable future. A seconded Vice-Principal joined the academy in February. In the first instance, he will remain in post until Easter. Lead teachers in English and mathematics have been appointed and will take up their posts after Easter. The academy has recently taken on the adjacent premises of a former primary school; this building now houses the sixth form centre and behaviour support unit.

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

Leadership has been strengthened since the previous monitoring inspection. As a result, the pace of improvement across the academy has accelerated. Ambitious and more consistent leadership has secured improvements in provision and outcomes for students. Staff and parents and carers welcome the clarity and stability that you have provided. Senior leaders who were in post at the time of the last visit have been tenacious in their drive to improve key aspects of the academy's work. Those recently appointed or new to their responsibilities have added further capacity.

The development plan has been streamlined. It enables leaders and the governing body to monitor closely the progress that the academy is making. Self-evaluation is now searching; it recognises strengths but does not shy away from the areas of work that need to improve most urgently. For example, although better, you recognise that information about students' progress is not always as accurate as it ought to be. You have also taken decisive action to change the timetable and review the curriculum. Despite being a potentially difficult transition, this well-managed recent change is increasing students' access to a more balanced range of appropriate subjects.

Middle leaders share your aspirational vision for improvement. They have a much clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities because the systems that support them and hold them to account are consistent. Most are now fully involved in a range of monitoring activities. They are beginning to gain confidence when tackling underperformance in the areas that they lead.

The governing body is led effectively by a knowledgeable Chair. Its members hold leaders to account with greater confidence and more actively monitor the impact of leaders' actions on raising achievement. The recently improved checks on the academy's use of the pupil premium have been too limited. Governors now know how the funding is being spent but have yet to evaluate the impact of this work.

The small group of parents and carers that I spoke to were very positive about the improvements that you have made. They also recognised that there are some parents and carers who find it harder to engage with the academy's work. I agree. Although in the early stages, the 'parents' forum' and a planned survey of parental views are evidence of your commitment to improve this aspect of the academy's work.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Overall, the progress made by students in their learning is accelerating because the quality of teaching is improving.
- More focused monitoring of lessons provides leaders with better information about the aspects of teaching that need to improve. Teachers receive feedback on their teaching that is more closely linked to their training needs. Teachers are responsive when receiving feedback and are keen to improve their practice. A small number of 'teacher developers' help colleagues to improve their teaching. This relatively new initiative is beginning to have a positive impact.
- Teachers dress smartly, are professional and act as positive role models for students. They have higher expectations about what students can achieve. They also have better information about students' prior learning and targets. Some use this knowledge well to plan lessons that are more challenging.
- Lessons usually get off to a brisk start. Teachers' explanations are tailored to needs and relatively little time is wasted before students are actively engaged in their learning. Students demonstrate greater enthusiasm for their learning. For example, when discussing their work or asking sensible questions. They complete more work in the time available and take greater care with their presentation.

- Younger students said that behaviour has continued to improve. Incidents of bullying are less frequent and students have greater confidence that when they report issues to teachers they will be dealt with promptly. Students feel safer when moving around the academy campus. They appreciate the higher visibility of staff at break and lunchtimes.
- Overall, attendance and punctuality has improved. The proportion of students who find it hard to attend regularly has fallen, as has the proportion of students that are excluded. Leaders now make better use of the information that they collect about different groups of students to monitor and improve their behaviour and attendance.
- Students demonstrate their increased pride in the academy through the way they conduct themselves and through their consistently smart appearance.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The progress made by students in mathematics is too slow.
- The quality of teaching in some departments is inconsistent. Some teachers do not yet plan lessons that challenge students of different abilities. Some teachers do not manage learning time efficiently to maximise students' learning. This means that students are not able to complete all of the work planned for them.
- Teachers do not always check carefully enough the progress that students have made in lessons. Teachers encourage students to discuss their work more often, but their repertoire of questioning strategies is sometimes limited. On occasions, boys do not participate as well in discussions as girls.
- Attendance in Year 10 and Year 11 is not good enough. The attendance of students eligible for the pupil premium, although improved, varies too much.
- Students do not always feel safe when using the stairs. The one-way system is not always enforced. A few older students do not always act as role models when moving around the academy site. In lessons, the behaviour of younger students is sometimes immature.
- Teachers' use of the academy's behaviour system, although much improved, is sometimes inconsistent.

### **External support**

You, your governing body, the sponsor and the local authority are working together to ensure that the academy improves quickly and sustainably. The regional director

from Academies Enterprise Trust visits regularly and has an accurate view of its progress. She holds you to account and supports your robust self-evaluation. The sponsor has brokered ongoing support for middle leaders that has improved their capacity to make improvements to provision and outcomes. External moderation of teachers' assessments has helped to strengthen the accuracy of information about students' progress. Members of the governing body were positive about the training they had received from the local authority. However, this is at an early stage.