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19 March 2014

Mrs Libby Fidock  
Principal  
Tree Tops Academy  
Brishing Lane  
Park Wood  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME15 9EZ

Dear Mrs Fidock

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Tree Tops Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 26 February 2014, 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 December 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, other leaders and the Chair of the Management Board who is also the Regional Director of Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the beginning of January, there have been several additions to the teaching staff. The vice-principal joined the school, a teaching and learning consultant has been employed for two days per week and a part-time teacher also joined the school to enhance provision at Key Stage 1. One teacher will leave the school at the end of February.

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

The previous inspection report commented that you and the management board had a clear understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvements. There are positive signs that the actions you are taking are leading to improvement. Since January, your leadership has been enhanced by the work of the vice-principal and the learning and teaching consultant. Recent training and guidance for middle leaders is also beginning to show results and they now make a stronger contribution to planning, monitoring and supporting their colleagues.

You are introducing a rigorous monitoring and training programme which takes into account pupils' work, teachers' planning and lesson observations. There is rapid follow up with appropriate individual coaching to support staff in carrying out improvements quickly. As the new assessment and tracking system is implemented, and teachers are trained to understand and use the information, this will also be increasingly used to provide a well-rounded understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. Some improvements are already evident such as the rise in Year 6 of pupils' attainment in reading. The recent focus on reading is obvious, with inviting book corners and new, well-organised resources across the school. Improvements to the environment mean that classrooms, shared spaces and corridors are welcoming and well organised, with useful and interesting displays.

The management board regularly checks that action is being taken, and is beginning to evaluate the impact on pupils' learning. Managers also take part in monitoring activities so that they are developing a better understanding of what is actually happening in the school. The Chair is the sponsor's regional director and plays a pivotal role in developing the capacity of senior leaders, as well as monitoring, evaluating and reporting to the sponsor. The academy benefits from a variety of support from the Academies Enterprise Trust but, as the leadership capacity of the academy improves, you and the other leaders are much more involved in commissioning and focusing this work. The sponsor's statement of action is the main improvement plan and the academy's plan supplements it. Although both plans are appropriate, they would benefit from a closer focus on improving teachers' ability to check on pupils' learning during lessons, and also sharpening up the targets and milestones to make it clearer exactly what success will look like for pupils and groups of pupils throughout the school. Pupils' achievement is exceptionally low and, as expectations are raised and pupils begin to achieve the current targets, the academy will need to review these regularly to make sure that they are challenging enough.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

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

The academy's 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, the Chair of the Management Board, the Director of Children's Services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheena Macdonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**