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Mr John Sheppard  
Principal  
The Hereford Academy  
Marlbrook Road  
Redhill  
Hereford  
HR2 7NG

Dear Mr Sheppard

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Hereford Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 18 March 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the principal, the Chair and other representatives of the Governing Body, and a representative of the sponsor. The sponsor's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, a change of sponsorship structure has been agreed with the Department for Education, allowing the Diocese of Hereford Board of Education to administer the academy as part of a new multi-academy trust. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected. The head of mathematics has stepped down and the head of science is now leading the mathematics department on an interim basis. Four mathematics teachers have left the school.

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

The principal has ensured that the academy is well focused on tackling the key weaknesses which led it to be placed in special measures. Self-evaluation of the academy's performance is honest and accurate. This has led to a school action plan, embedded within the statement of action, which addresses head-on the main issues identified in the inspection report, especially around improving teaching quality, leadership and standards in English and mathematics. The plan rightly goes further in setting out, as priorities, actions to raise the achievement of post-16 students and to overcome the poor literacy standards which hold back standards across the academy. Targets for improvement are, however, not always sufficiently precise and measurable through the plan, especially on closing gaps for students eligible for the pupil premium and for whole-school literacy programmes. The academy has continued to build on its strengths, particularly in promoting the positive ethos which has led to significant improvements in behaviour and attendance. It has also continued to engage strongly with its community with initiatives aimed at overcoming barriers to learning for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The sponsor has taken an active role in strengthening academy leadership, including through promoting more effective governance. The governing body, under new chairmanship, has developed its structures and skills to ask questions of leaders about the impact of improvement actions. Governing body minutes now set out more clearly than in the past this higher degree of challenge and recommendations for further action. Monthly meetings of the governors' action group allow regular evaluation of the academy's progress against the action plan. Some delays have occurred to the implementation of the review of governance and the pupil premium specified in the inspection report, because new sponsorship and governance arrangements have been under negotiation with the Department for Education. The review of governance has, however, now been commissioned and papers submitted to reviewers for scrutiny. The sponsor has also commissioned a review of leadership to ensure that, across the academy, leadership roles and structures are efficient and effective. The effectiveness of leadership at all levels has been constrained by a lack of reliable information about student progress across the academy. Firm actions are now in place to gather progress data more regularly and present this more transparently, but leaders recognise that inconsistencies and inaccuracies remain at present.

The academy has developed a network of links with external agencies and other schools to support improvement and to draw on best practice. Detailed consideration has been given to the benefits that each partnership can bring to specific aspects of the academy's work, but the allocation of resources and expected commitment from each partner are not always precisely defined.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I recommend that the academy may appoint NQTs, but not in the English and mathematics departments.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese of Hereford, the Academies Advisers Unit, and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**Ian Hodgkinson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**