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25 March 2014

Mr Ian Appleton  
Headteacher  
Testwood Sports College  
Testwood Lane  
Totton  
Southampton  
SO40 3ZW

Dear Mr Appleton

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Testwood Sports College**

Following my visit to your academy on 24 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 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 November 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, the senior leadership team and representatives from the governing body. I also met with a specialist leader in education from a local school and the local authority's school improvement manager. I evaluated the governing body's statement of action and the academy's improvement and action plans.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been no significant staff changes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are retiring at the end of the academic year. Interviews for a new headteacher began the day following this inspection visit.

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

Senior leaders do not have enough rigour in their approach to improving the academy. They are not applying high enough standards when they evaluate what they do. Consequently, their judgement about how effectively they are moving the academy forward is too generous.

The academy's improvement plans do not have clear timescales to indicate when actions should be completed. It is not apparent who is responsible for carrying out planned actions or for checking that they have been done properly. The plans are not precise enough about how leaders will evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve the academy. They do not, therefore, fulfil their function of helping governors to check whether the academy is making good enough progress.

The academy is currently very reliant on assistance from leaders from other schools. However, academy leaders do not have a clear enough view of what they hope to achieve through this support. As a result, actions taken to help the academy are not ensuring rapid progress. While it is appropriate to make use of external support in the short term, it is not evident when the school's leaders will be able to deliver the necessary improvements for themselves.

Academy leaders do not have a clear enough grasp of how to sharpen their monitoring and evaluation of subject leadership. Senior leaders have begun to track the progress that different groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals, are making against end-of-year targets. However, they are not checking whether students have targets that are sufficiently challenging. Tracking information shows too much variation in progress between subjects and year groups. The senior leadership team does not consistently question and challenge subject leaders about this. Governors are not using student progress information to evaluate whether academy leaders have made effective use of additional government funding to support students eligible for free school meals.

Governors are asking more challenging questions of the academy's leaders but are unable to judge the quality or reliability of the answers they get. They know that some significant changes are needed but they are unclear about what specific actions are required and in what order. They recognise that there are gaps in their knowledge and have begun to receive training from the local authority's governor support services and governors from local schools. They find it more difficult to hold the academy to account because of the lack of precision and timescales in the improvement and action plans. The external review of governance which was recommended in the previous inspection in November is happening too slowly. The governors understand how crucial their role is in overseeing change. However, they have not shown sufficient urgency or initiative in developing the skills needed to drive the rapid changes required. As academy governors, they have sole responsibility for student achievement, but are not fulfilling that role effectively.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

The governing body's statement of action and the academy's improvement plans are not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs).

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**