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17 June 2014

Ms Susan Cousin  
Principal  
Yewlands Academy  
Creswick Lane  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S35 8NN

Dear Ms Cousin

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Yewlands Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 16 June 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 academy's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and other senior leaders. I evaluated the sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan. You and the executive headteacher accompanied me on a tour of the academy during which we made brief lesson visits, spoke to students and looked at their written work.

### **Context**

The former stand-alone academy is now sponsored by Wakefield City Academies Trust. A full time Principal has been seconded to the academy by the trust. One of the co-headteachers has been seconded to another school. Three teachers have left the academy. New subject leaders have been appointed to key subject areas including English and mathematics.

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

The senior leadership team, supported effectively by the sponsor and executive headteacher, have quickly undertaken some key tasks to sustain the academy's improvement. They have reviewed the roles and responsibilities within the senior team and carefully matched jobs and skills so that they can make best use of available talent.

Important work to raise the aspirations and expectations of staff, students and their parents has begun. For example, every student has been set challenging targets. Teachers have had training to make sure they understand how much they can expect students to achieve. Students are responding well to teachers' increasingly higher expectations.

Teachers' marking has improved. Students are getting more consistent opportunities to respond to the written comments on their work. The quality of teachers' comments and students' responses is variable; nevertheless, there is a clear improvement since the last inspection.

The review of the work of the governing body is underway. Governors are candid about what they need to improve and they are working closely with a National Leader for Governance. This work is at an early stage but governors are well aware of the significant journey ahead of them.

Senior leaders are also frank in assessing the scale of the task at hand. The executive team, which includes a representative of the sponsor, the executive headteacher and the Principal, is keeping a close eye on the academy's progress. Currently, the governing body is not represented but there are sound plans to include the Chair of the Governing Body.

The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan lay out a firm foundation for improvement. They set out clear actions to bring about rapid improvement. The plan spells out what success will look like in the long term, who is responsible for leading on actions and when tasks will be completed. However, it is not clear enough about when leaders will check that tasks have been completed or when the executive team will evaluate the effect on how well the academy is doing. The plan includes some helpful 'milestones' but these do not detail exactly what senior leaders and governors should be looking for when they are making interim checks on the success of the action plan, particularly for students in different year groups and across different subject areas.

The review of the academy's use of the pupil premium funding is underway. This is already showing early signs of improving students' reading skills. Senior staff are assiduously checking how well students who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium are attending, and how well they behave, as well as carefully analysing their achievement. This will be useful for leaders as they plan

how to use the funding to close the gaps in attainment and progress between these students and their peers.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**