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3 July 2014

Mrs Jenny Pitman  
Headteacher  
Testwood Sports College  
Testwood Lane  
Totton  
Southampton  
SO40 3ZW

Dear Mrs Pitman

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

Following my visit with Cliff Mainey, additional inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 July 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. 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 special measures.

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

The academy may appoint a small number of newly qualified teachers in any subject area except science.

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

Yours sincerely  
Sarah Hubbard

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching so that a high proportion is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
  - teachers track the progress of students frequently, accurately and in sufficient depth to enable them to plan lessons that ensure students make rapid progress from their starting points
  - expectations, and consequently achievement targets, are consistently high and teachers provide suitable opportunities for students to challenge themselves and to develop confidence in learning how to make decisions for themselves about how to improve their work
  - all teachers give detailed written feedback frequently to their students and then ensure that recommended improvements are carried out
  - teachers prepare students properly for examinations so that all achieve well, including those supported by extra funding and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Raise levels of achievement in GCSE examinations, especially in English, so that standards are at least in line with national averages.
- Review, evaluate and improve the provision made to support students eligible for pupil premium funding so that the gaps between their achievement and that of others close.
- Ensure that incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively by all members of staff.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership at all levels by ensuring that:
  - there is rigour and precision in the evaluation of college policies, strategies and initiatives
  - the results of evaluation are used to improve provision and as a consequence, achievement
  - assessment data are accurate and are used effectively to promote students' progress
  - strategies already in place to improve teaching and learning are embedded and extended.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 July 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors surveyed the academy's work, observed lessons jointly with senior leaders and scrutinised documents. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of students, the Chair of the Governing body along with a parent governor, and the executive headteacher of The Arnewood School which is providing the academy with support.

### **Context**

On 9 May 2014, the ex-headteacher retired, and on 12 May 2014, the new headteacher took up her post. The deputy headteacher is retiring at the end of this term. As yet, no replacement has been appointed.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

In Year 11, achievement is improving in both English and mathematics according to the academy's own information. This information is based on GCSE examinations taken in November 2013 and predictions checked by local authority representatives. This improving achievement is due to the intensive support provided by the academy in the run-up to recent GCSE examinations, including Easter revision classes.

Students' progress in English from Year 7 to Year 11 is improving considerably. However, students eligible for additional pupil premium funding are not making as much progress as other students in English. Conversely, in mathematics, students eligible for this additional funding are catching up with other students.

The academy's leaders are predicting improvements in the number of students achieving five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics this year, but the academy predicts that a smaller proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium will achieve GCSE grades at this level. The academy has appropriate plans in place to narrow this gap, including the appointment of new staff dedicated to improving the achievement of this and other groups of students.

In Years 7 to 9, information from the new tracking system shows inconsistencies in progress between years, and groups of students, especially boys. The progress students make in science from Year 7 to 9 is slower than in English and mathematics. The information shows that the progress made by the majority of students in all three subjects during the autumn term was very slow. This means that, despite the more rapid progress students have been making recently, many have not met their end-of-year targets. Examples of this rapid progress were seen by inspectors where teaching was most effective. Teachers explore topics in a challenging and stimulating way. Grades placed on students' best work show improvements since Easter. The standard of students' discussion where teaching is stronger is high, and this helps to support good-quality writing.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving because of the new systems put in place by the headteacher to track students' progress. Teachers in most subject areas, except science, are using the information from the new system well. The majority of teachers are drawing on it to plan the seating arrangements in their classrooms so students are best placed to learn. Teachers are aware of who needs the extra help, and focus their questioning and extra support on these students, but this information is not yet being used to closely match tasks to students' abilities. In some lessons, even though the main activities are open-ended, the most-able students finish them too quickly and the less able are not skilled enough to complete them.

There is a high degree of consistency in the quality of teachers' marking of students' best pieces of work. Students keep these best pieces in a separate folder and are proud of them. There is a sheet on the front where students record their marks and their own summary of what they need to do to improve. This helps students to have greater direction over their own success. Students questioned were able to articulate clearly what they, rather than their teachers, had done to improve their scores. Students understand the importance of reflecting on their own strengths and weaknesses. Although teachers are giving consistently detailed feedback on best work, on occasion students' extended writing in exercise books is hardly commented upon. This is a missed opportunity to help students improve further. Students spoken to during the inspection confirmed that this can be a disincentive.

The academy has introduced Key Stage 3 examinations to ensure students are properly prepared for their GCSEs. Teachers are using these examinations as an opportunity to explicitly teach crucial study and examination skills. Students are well-engaged in lessons which focus on these skills because teachers use the students' answers as examples and models of good practice.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The behaviour of students around the site is good. The staff are highly visible at break and lunchtime. The calm and orderly atmosphere is maintained by the non-confrontational way in which students' behaviour around the site is managed. After a hot, busy lunchtime, there was virtually no litter around the site. Students make an active contribution to keeping their peers safe, and speak of the impact of peer mentors in ensuring younger students have someone to turn to during break and lunchtime.

The academy is tightening up the way it records the checks it makes on newly appointed staff. The new headteacher has rigorously ensured that staff who joined the academy a long time ago have the necessary checks in place.

There is very little disruption of learning in lessons. Inspectors witnessed no incidents of disruptive behaviour in lessons during their visit. Where teaching is

weaker, students who are less involved in what they are learning slow down their work rate, and some stop working altogether. However, they do not disrupt others. Students are not routinely challenging themselves to work as hard as they can.

Attendance is improving. There is a slight improvement in attendance compared with the same period in the previous academic year. The attendance of Year 8 since last year is noticeably better. The academy is not referring enough to different student groups when analysing attendance.

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

The appointment of the new headteacher has had a very positive impact on staff and student morale in the academy. The new headteacher is determined to move the school out of special measures as soon as possible. She has introduced a more effective way of collating information about students' achievement. She is training senior leaders to use this information to hold subject leaders to account for students' progress in their subject area. As a result of being better challenged by senior leaders, some subject leaders are making appropriate changes. Some senior leaders are monitoring these changes closely. Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies in the rigour with which senior leaders carry out these checks. Senior leaders are inconsistent in how direct and robust they are when giving feedback to staff on the quality of their teaching. Records of senior leaders' scrutiny of students' books show discrepancies in how sharp and clear their evaluations are.

Governors have moved quickly to ensure the new headteacher is able to take up her post promptly. As a result, changes are being planned now ready for September. However, the governing body has not taken sufficient account of recommendations from an external review of governance, particularly with regard to their monitoring of the impact of additional funding on students' achievement. The Chair of the Governing Body knows this needs urgent improvement. As yet, there is no one on the governing body with sufficient education experience to successfully hold the academy to account for the use of this funding. The shift to more frequent full governing body meetings is enabling governors to focus more fully on challenging and supporting the academy to do better, although the governors are currently too reliant on the headteacher's assistance to be able to challenge the academy robustly.

### **External support**

The new headteacher has rightly reduced the number of external providers working with the academy. The Arnewood School provides support: this has been a recent change so it is too early to measure its impact. The Arnewood School's support is tailor-made to meet the needs of the academy. The headteacher of The Arnewood School is a National Leader of Education and is providing appropriate guidance and challenge to the headteacher. The partner school's Chair of the Governing Body has very recently begun working with his counterpart. This support is very well targeted.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the headteacher has worked closely with governors to ensure that the statement of action is now fit for purpose. The statement of action is more detailed and includes specific dates when actions will be completed. It is not yet consistently clear about how the improvements will make a difference to students' achievement. It rightly focuses on improving leadership and governance.