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7 July 2014

Mr Andrew Farren  
Interim Principal  
University Academy Liverpool  
Dingle Vale  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L8 9SJ

Dear Mr Farren

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of University Academy Liverpool**

Following my visit to your academy on 4 July 2014 with Karen Bramwell, Associate Inspector, 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 March 2014.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the interim vice-Principal, the executive Principal and two other representatives of the teaching school which is supporting the academy, the interim managing director and another representative of the academy's sponsor, the University of Chester Academies Trust (UCAT). The sponsor's statement of action, which also serves as the academy's improvement plan, was evaluated. Classrooms were visited accompanied by the interim vice-Principal.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, the Principal, vice-Principal and an assistant Principal of the academy have resigned. An interim Principal has been appointed from outside of the academy and an interim vice-Principal appointed from within the academy. One teacher has resigned.

There have been no recent meetings of the local governing body. Responsibility for governance has been taken by the Education Standards Committee of UCAT.

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

The sponsor has increased its support and challenge to the academy since the inspection, including the appointment of an interim Principal and interim vice-Principal. This has strengthened senior leadership. The interim Principal and interim vice-Principal have rapidly taken steps to improve the academy; including robust action to ensure that leadership at all levels becomes stronger. The interim Principal has started to tackle the culture of low expectation of staff in the academy. Previous staff reluctance to support fully senior leaders' initiatives and instructions is reducing. The quality of teaching and learning is beginning to become more consistent. Members of staff have started to share concerns with senior leaders and this is allowing poor practice to be challenged. A review of staffing structures and responsibilities has been initiated.

The interim Principal has identified that there are safeguarding issues to be addressed in the academy. UCAT has commissioned an immediate review of the academy's safeguarding practices. The child protection policy is not available on the academy's website, which means parents have no easy access to it. The interim arrangements for governance mean that there is no local governor with responsibility for safeguarding. This responsibility has been taken on by a director of UCAT.

A thorough review of the work of the academy, on behalf of UCAT, has been completed by a team from St John Plessington Roman Catholic High School in partnership with senior leaders from the academy. This school is the lead school in UCAT's school improvement strategy. The review evaluated achievement, teaching and learning, students' attitudes to learning, the quality of leadership, leadership and management of the sixth form, the pupil premium (additional government funding) and the use of resources. In all of these aspects, except the use of resources, the review identified next steps academy leaders should take in response to the inspection report. The review also raised serious concerns about the leadership of provision for students with disabilities and special educational needs. Although the review has not been considered by the UCAT board, its interim recommendations provide useful information to senior leaders in planning for the academy's improvement.

Improvement to the academy's collection and use of data on students' achievement started before the inspection. This work has continued. The data indicate that Year 11 students are on track to achieve better than last year. Improvements to teaching

since the inspection include extra lessons for students falling behind and improved marking. However, senior leaders recognise that the achievement of many students will still not be as good as it should be.

Senior leaders and UCAT have concerns about the weakness of provision in the sixth form. UCAT leaders have held discussions with the Department for Education and the local authority to consider whether entry to Year 12 should be suspended for September 2014. The academy is aware that commitments to current and potential students must be fulfilled. The sponsor is investigating how sixth-form arrangements and leadership can be improved in the longer term.

The local governing body has temporarily been replaced by the education and standards committee of UCAT. It is planned that a small group of people with specialist experience will form a Statement of Action Committee to provide governance for the academy from September. This committee will be led by a National Leader of Governance. While the committee will have access to community representation, including a local councillor who knows the local community very well, it is important that all its members rapidly understand the academy and its context so that their support and challenge can be immediate.

The interim Principal and interim managing director of UCAT prepared an initial statement of action after the inspection. This sets out actions expected to December 2014 and, in general terms, who is responsible. It also indicates future intentions. Information from the recent review by the lead school was not available to inform the preparation of the statement of action. This has contributed to it lacking sufficient detail to be clear about what difference is expected after actions have been completed or what progress is expected at intermediate points. It does not indicate how this progress will be checked, nor how governors will be involved in ensuring there is the impact expected. The use of one document as the sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan means that the separate responsibilities of the sponsor and the academy are not readily identified. The statement of action indicates that much of the support for the academy will be provided by the lead school. The teaching school provides support to all the academies in the UCAT chain. It is important that senior leaders from the academy, lead school and UCAT check that there is enough capacity to continue to provide the effective support and robust challenge that the academy requires. Once the outcomes from the recent review are approved by the UCAT board, the statement of action will be revised and a separate academy improvement plan written.

The single central record, which records employment suitability checks carried out by the academy, meets requirements.

A review of governance across all the UCAT academies, including University Academy Liverpool, was completed around the time of the inspection. This contributed to the decision to introduce a Statement of Action Committee. UCAT intends that further review work will be done by the National Leader of Governance as the committee is established.

The recent review of the academy by the team from St John Plessington Roman Catholic High School identified that the pupil premium has not been used as well as possible. A review of the use of the pupil premium will be conducted across all UCAT academies later this term.

In addition to the areas for improvement identified in the report from the recent inspection, the academy should take the following actions to improve further:

- ensure that arrangements for the safeguarding of students are swiftly fully secure by implementing the outcomes of the review of safeguarding and determining and taking any other necessary actions
- improve the leadership of provision for students with disabilities or special educational needs with immediate effect.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The academy improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers. However, newly qualified teachers employed and supported by the teaching school may be deployed at the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Department for Education, the interim managing director of UCAT, the Director for Children and Young Peoples Services for Liverpool and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**