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9<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Mr Mark Lester  
Principal  
Rushden Community College  
Hayway  
Rushden  
NN10 6AG

Dear Mr Lester

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rushden Community College**

Following my visit to your school on 9 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help given to me by your colleagues and the time they made available to discuss the actions they are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the Associate Principal, the new Interim Principal, the new Executive Principal, senior and subject leaders and a representative of the Education Fellowship Trust (TEF). I spoke on the telephone to the Chair of the Governing Body. I visited classrooms and spoke to students informally. I observed students' behaviour at lunchtime and between lessons. I looked at a range of documentation including the post-Ofsted action plan, information about students' achievement, minutes of the Academy quarterly review meetings, and governing body minutes.

## **Context**

You were not in school during this monitoring inspection, having been absent since October 2013. Since the inspection no new members of staff have started. However, an Interim Principal has been appointed internally to replace the Associate Principal from September. The Academy Trust has also brokered the support of an Executive Principal for one day per week.

## **Main findings**

The action plan is concise, takes accurate account of the areas for improvement and outlines clear responsibility for monitoring and evaluation. Success criteria are evident but lack measurable outcomes.

The Associate Principal has sought to lay the foundations for effective leadership and has rightly put teaching at the heart of school improvement. Leadership systems are underpinned by consistency and there is a shared understanding of the importance of this.

An efficient system for recording students' progress has been introduced. It enables leaders to pinpoint accurate interventions. For example, the subject leader for English can identify the students who need further support in Key Stage 3, and has used this information to hold teachers to account. The system has also been effective in identifying where teaching assistants will have most impact. The achievement of students with special educational needs is starting to accelerate, particularly in Year 8. The leader responsible for pupil premium has made best use of research to ensure that actions taken are cost effective and proven to have high impact. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who, in this school, are known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children. As a result, the gap in achievement for Year 7 students, in receipt of this additional funding, is starting to close.

The marking policy has been strengthened to incorporate a number of non-negotiables. Marking remains variable; the best practice was seen in history, where students responded on sticky notes and the teacher wrote further comments to extend their thinking.

Behaviour at lunchtime is good. Students are well-supervised and have responded positively to duty staff who now wear high-visibility jackets. There is a culture of high expectation for behaviour from the moment the students arrive at school. Since the inspection a 'Ready to Present' policy has been introduced. This sets out simple expectations for uniform and equipment. Incidents of not being ready to learn and the number of fixed term exclusions have reduced. Leaders have rightly identified that more work needs to be done to improve students' attitudes to learning and to ensure teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently.

Governors know the school well and have a good understanding of the issues affecting the school. TEF has issued a new governance handbook that clarifies the responsibilities for the academy board and the governors. The planned review of governance is scheduled for later in the year, once the new governing body arrangements are embedded.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The Director of Education for TEF has provided tailored support. She is clear that her role involves empowering leaders to develop the unique ethos of the school under a culture of consistency. She has provided additional training to governors to ensure that they understand their responsibilities.

I am copying this letter to the Associate Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chief Executive Office of the Education Fellowship Trust, the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire and the DfE Academies Advisers' Unit.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**