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Sarah Wilson
Acting Principal
Sawtry Community College
Fen Lane
Sawtry
Huntingdon
PE28 5TQ

Dear Mrs Wilson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sawtry Community College

Following my visit to your school on 21 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, nominated senior leaders and two governor representatives, including the newly elected Vice Chair of the Governing Body. You took me on a tour of the school. I also checked the academy's single central record.

The academy development plan was evaluated. There is no separate proprietor's action plan.

Context

Since the recent inspection, the Principal has resigned with immediate effect, as have the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. You have stepped up from

Deputy Principal to lead the academy, the Vice Principal is on long-term absence, and the other Deputy Principal is stepping down from his role in September. These changes have necessitated the restructuring of the leadership team on an interim basis. A significant number of other staff are leaving the academy at the end of term. Appointments, including some that are temporary, have filled all teacher vacancies for September.

The academy is in dialogue with an academy sponsor to become part of its multi-academy trust. There remain three governor vacancies, but the composition and structure of the governing body will be reviewed once the academy's status is finalised.

On 23 June, the local authority conducted a review of the academy's safeguarding arrangements. This was followed up with a return visit on 14 July. On 27 June, the Department for Education undertook a visit to review the academy's performance, and, on 21 July, the Education Funding Agency started its investigation into the financial management of the academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The academy's leadership has been stabilised by the establishment of a cohesive interim senior leadership team. The Acting Principal has galvanised staff and has worked quickly to draw up a comprehensive development plan. Safeguarding students is rightly seen as the top priority, and procedural shortcomings highlighted by the local authority audit are being addressed with suitable urgency.

By comparison, the findings of the recent report came as a surprise to governors, who were unaware of their responsibilities and had neglected to hold the academy's dysfunctional leadership to account. Communication with senior leaders and between governors has improved, so that the governing body is beginning to gain a more accurate picture of the academy's predicament. However, the governing body has in the past been misinformed and has been negligent in holding the former Principal to account. Governors are in no position to provide strategic leadership for the academy because their own procedures for monitoring the academy's work are entirely underdeveloped. Governors need considerable external support, including training, as a matter of urgency. The external review of governance, recommended in the recent inspection, has not yet been organised, neither has the external review of the use of pupil premium funding.

Although the academy's development plan is comprehensive, it is unwieldy for those who have to implement it and review its progress. For example, the plan lacks the essential milestones and sharp success criteria that will enable governors to check

that actions are on track. Procedures for monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of planned actions also lack clarity.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's development plan, which incorporates the proprietor's statement of action, is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector