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17 July 2014

Mr Showk Badat  
Headteacher  
Gloucester Academy  
Cotteswold Road  
Gloucester  
GL4 6RN

Dear Mr Badat

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Gloucester Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 that took place in April 2014.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, the Chair and two members of the governing body, one representing the Academy Trust. Discussions were held with leaders directly responsible for implementing the post-inspection action plan. School progress data were reviewed. The single central record was checked. The inspector undertook a tour of the school and joined two members of staff for lunch in the dining hall. The sponsor's statement of action and improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

Immediately following the last inspection, Prospects Academies Trust took over the control of the school from the original co-sponsors. On 14 May 2014, Prospects Academies Trust announced their plan to dissolve. The governing body has prepared a proposal for future sponsorship that is being presented to the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education. It is anticipated that a decision is likely on the future sponsor for the academy before the start of the new academic year. Until then, Prospects Academies Trust remains the responsible body.

Since the last inspection, a whole-school staffing restructure has taken place. The school day has been reorganised to allow for a longer period of lessons on four days and a shorter afternoon on Fridays.

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

The work you started before the last inspection to streamline leadership has continued. You have successfully built on the academy leaders' emerging strengths, identified in the last inspection report, to place them at the heart of the changes. The leaders I met with know the direction they are going in and have taken ownership already of much of the journey. Governors, too, are clear. They have worked hard behind the scenes to ensure that the staffing issues are sorted out quickly. The minutes of their meetings show they present robust challenges to your plans and assess the short-term and long-term benefits for students.

The post-inspection action plan responds absolutely to the priorities set out in the inspection report. The areas to be developed are linked together well, conveying the overall picture of where next and the steps to be taken on the way. Those leaders responsible for implementing the actions are clear about their roles.

There is an emphasis on ensuring all students read at least to the standard expected of their age. This is rightly one of the highest priorities. The reorganisation of teaching assistants so that their skills are better used to support improvements in literacy is effective. The push to ensure all subject teachers are aware of, and active in, improving reading has the potential to further raise students' aspirations. This work combines well with the additional staffing in Year 7 to help the significant number of students who have low numeracy and literacy skills. Many of these students are entitled to the premium funding. Both examples demonstrate how thoughtful restructuring by the governing body is underpinning the actions set out in the plan.

The plan lacks some features that support effective monitoring. It lacks a clear distinction between the dates when actions are to be reviewed and how you will judge the success of each action. For example, the success measures for improving behaviour and students' attitudes to learning are not precise enough. There is reference to some measures to combat issues such as truancy and exclusion but nothing that would show increased commitment by students to the curriculum. Some of the language used in the action plan makes it inaccessible to a wider audience. The widespread use of acronyms in the action plan is obscuring key messages for some governors and is not helpful in strengthening the academy's partnership with parents and carers. There is still work to do to complete all the budgetary details. This is made more difficult as the implications for staff development and training are not yet identified in the financial plan.

You are demonstrating strong and decisive leadership. You have challenged the teachers to look afresh at how they inspire and encourage students to become motivated learners. There is an effective combination of lesson observations, reviewing students' work and regular checks of attainment. This allows leaders and staff to review the progress towards ensuring that the quality of teaching is good and that students are making stronger progress than in the past.

The Vice-Principal and Assistant Principals provide well-constructed guidance to help teachers deliver effective lessons. The framework for lessons sets high expectations of students' intellectual commitment. The framework rightly insists that teachers use their skills to draw out and deepen students' thinking and ensure that there is a clear reason behind the learning. Consequently, lessons are becoming more purposeful as a result and students more engaged than they have been previously.

You and your Vice-Principal have made it very clear to staff how their performance is managed. Teachers who cannot yet match up to these raised expectations are supported well through the professional development programme. The programme is making good use of partnerships with local teaching schools to ensure that the quality of teaching is rapidly improved.

The review of governance has understandably been put on hold while a new sponsor for the academy is found. The current governors are committed and have organised themselves well to monitor priorities on a regular basis.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

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

The school's action plan is 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 Gloucestershire, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**