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23 September 2014

Mr Christopher Hilton  
Headteacher  
Harborne Academy  
Harborne Road  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 3JL

Dear Mr Hilton

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Harborne Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 22 September 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 you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy 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, governors and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- evaluate the use of the pupil premium funding by commissioning an external review of this spending.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, members of your senior leadership team, three members of the governing body and a representative of the sponsor, Birmingham Metropolitan College, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I made short visits to a number of classrooms with you and spoke to students. Additionally, I evaluated the academy's development plan, reviewed documentation related to students' achievement, safety and wellbeing, and the academy's arrangements to manage the performance of teachers.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, an interim Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed following the retirement of the previous leader. The sixth form opened on the academy site in September 2014.

## **Main findings**

As the headteacher, you are driving improvements and making changes to leadership and staff roles and responsibilities.

The academy's records show that improvements to teaching are beginning to make a difference to students' achievement. These records also show that students supported by the additional pupil premium funding are now making progress that is nearer to that of their classmates than has been the case in the past. You have evaluated how well this additional funding has been spent.

2014 GCSE results were variable. Students' achievement in mathematics improved on the previous year's results and those students supported by the pupil premium funding made more progress than their peers in this subject. However, results in English were weak and teachers' predictions for students' achievement were not met. An appropriate plan of action is in place to tackle this and other weaknesses in the subject.

Leaders are now gathering a wider range of evidence to decide on the quality of teaching, which takes more account of how quickly students are making progress. The management of teachers' performance is now more rigorously linked to how students achieve and training for teachers are linked to the academy's improvement priorities. Leaders are taking decisive action where the impact of teachers' performance is of a concern.

The sponsor has a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weakness and is providing increased levels of challenge to you and other leaders. Governors have responded to some of the issues raised at the previous inspection. An external review of governance has been completed and governors are awaiting the final report which you have agreed to send to me by email. Governors and the sponsor have acted on the initial findings, such as introducing 'link' governors to different aspects of the academy's work and consulting on restructuring the governing body. However, an external review of how well the pupil premium funding is being spent has not been commissioned. This must take place as soon as possible and a copy of the report also sent to me by email.

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

## **External support**

Bartley Green Teaching School is providing support to the academy in relation to developing leadership in the English department and to support colleagues in that department with improving teaching and the curriculum. This is at an early stage and so it is too soon to comment on the impact. You are also working with other headteachers on a project to review each other's schools.

Colleagues from the sponsor have successfully supported leaders to develop the sixth form provision and continue to provide teaching expertise in key subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham local authority and as below.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc: The Education Funding Agency; the DfE Academies Advisers Unit