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10 September 2014

Bhupinder Kondal  
Principal  
Oldknow Academy  
Oldknow Road  
Small Heath  
Birmingham  
B10 0HU

Dear Mrs Kondal

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

Following my visit with Andrew Cook and Deborah James, Her Majesty's Inspectors, to your academy on 9 September 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 that 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 that took place in April 2014.

### **Evidence**

During this monitoring inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, the senior leadership team, pupils and the board of trustees. Informal discussions were held with parents. Her Majesty's Inspectors considered the responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. A survey of staff was conducted and inspectors scrutinised the 37 returns. They also made short visits to lessons. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

The board of trustees and governors in place at the time of the previous inspection have since resigned from the academy and a new board of trustees was appointed

in August. From 1 September, the academy's Principal has returned to work and the Acting Principal has returned to his substantive post as Vice Principal.

Inspectors were aware during the inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the academy in response to the allegations were considered, alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection, to inform inspectors' judgements.

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

Since the last inspection, little has been achieved to address deep-seated weaknesses in governance and safeguarding. Senior leadership has functioned on a temporary basis and little has been achieved to improve the academy. The evidence demonstrates that staff members remain divided, with split loyalties and allegiances. There is no clear focus on how to unite teams with a common purpose and some staff do not trust one another.

Despite repeated requests by Ofsted, the previous trustees failed to produce an adequate statement of action outlining how they would tackle the weaknesses to governance and safeguarding identified at the previous inspection. The improvement plan suggests that complex issues would be resolved in a very short timescale, with no details of how the academy intends to improve beyond the next six weeks. The plan is unrealistic and confusing. For example, although it states that governance arrangements will be 'transparent and compliant', it also states that this work will be completed in September 2014 with a new governing body in place. However, the academy is currently operating without a full complement of governors. The only governors in place are the current trustees and the Principal.

The Department for Education has been working with the academy since the inspection in April. The new board of trustees was only appointed in August. As yet, it has had very limited impact on the academy. The trustees have not yet met with the senior leadership team. There is no agreed vision for the strategic direction of the academy and trustees have not agreed how they will hold senior leaders to account. Elections for parent and staff governors are underway. However, there is a lack of a robust strategy to ensure that new governors bring the skills needed for the governing body to work effectively.

Worryingly, trustees were not aware that a visit to Saudi Arabia had taken place this year for pupils and staff, despite a similar trip last year receiving criticism from inspectors at the previous inspection due to failures in safeguarding. Indeed, they had been told by senior leaders that the visit had been cancelled. Plans have been

started to ensure that assemblies and personal, social and health education create opportunities to foster an appreciation of, and respect for, different faiths and cultures. However, the Principal has received over 100 letters from parents requesting that their child should be withdrawn from collective worship. Senior leaders recognise that this is limiting the academy's ability to deliver this priority.

Pupils are positive about the academy. They told inspectors that they were happy and enjoyed school life. However, they found it difficult to indicate ways in which the academy had changed for the better since the previous inspection.

Staff questionnaires show a division in the views of staff members. While some are positive about changes, others do not value senior leaders and feel that some staff are not treated fairly.

Inspectors spoke to members of the Oldknow Parents' Association, who voiced dissatisfaction about the work of some senior leaders.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the trust and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter has been copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- The Secretary of State
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form

- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [[open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)] - for academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) [hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk) if the school is a non-maintained special school