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Mr Stephen Henry  
Principal  
Fulwood Academy  
Black Bull Lane  
Fulwood  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR2 9YR

Dear Mr Henry

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

Following my visit with Lynne Selkirk and Paul Rafferty, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 23 and 24 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 which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that, at this time, the academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures. The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers in those subjects where there is sufficient leadership capacity to support them.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the sponsor, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013**

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good or better in order to accelerate progress quickly for all groups of students, especially in mathematics and English by ensuring that:
  - all teachers have consistently high expectations of students and set demanding tasks
  - staff use information on students' progress to check more rigorously that students are doing well enough
  - teachers plan lessons carefully to get the most out of all students, including the most able and those that need additional support
  - the pace and challenge of learning in lessons increases
  - teachers provide more opportunities for students to find things out for themselves and improve their independent learning skills
  - those students who require additional help with their learning receive effective support
  - that teachers' marking gives students useful guidance on how to improve in the subject.
  
- Raise standards, in mathematics and English, by making sure that:
  - learning for students in mathematics is practical and meaningful, and involves them in working things out for themselves
  - teachers adopt a consistent approach to improving students' skills in speaking, writing, spelling and numeracy in subjects across the curriculum.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders, and bring greater urgency to the drive to improve achievement, by:
  - ensuring the accuracy of the academy's self-evaluation, particularly in judging students' progress and the impact of teaching on progress over time
  - improving the quality of teaching so that it is good enough to help students make up for prior underachievement
  - ensuring all teachers have high enough expectations of what students can achieve
  - ensuring that leaders track students' progress more closely in order to identify underachievement more quickly
  - ensuring middle leaders are held accountable for the progress students make, and the effectiveness of teaching, in their areas of responsibility
  - making sure leaders of subjects hold class teachers to account for the progress students make
  - taking firm action to deal with any inadequate teaching.

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:
  - making sure that governors are fully informed about the effectiveness of teaching, and how well students are making progress, including in relation to national expectations
  - holding senior leaders more rigorously to account for the progress of all students and the impact of teaching on students' progress over time
  - checking more closely on the use of pupil premium funding and fully challenging leaders on how well it is used to raise achievement
  - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of pupil premium funding, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 September 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the work of the academy and met with the Principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and groups of students. Telephone discussions were held with the sponsor and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed substantial parts of 19 lessons, three of which were joint observations with senior leaders. Brief visits were made to several other lessons, a support session for students at the early stages of learning English and two tutorial sessions. A scrutiny of students' work was undertaken and various documents were considered, including the academy's analysis of students' achievements, minutes of governing body meetings and external evaluations of the academy's work.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, two senior leaders and eight other teachers have left the academy. Two new assistant Principals have been appointed, along with five permanent teachers. A vice-Principal has stepped down from the senior team and is now leading a coaching programme to support teachers, including those who are new to the academy or to the profession. Three teachers have returned from maternity leave and two others are currently absent; their classes are covered by temporary teachers. The special educational needs coordinator relinquished her role and a new post-holder has been appointed. New key stage coordinator roles, filled by existing members of staff, have been introduced in mathematics, English and science. A numeracy coordinator has been appointed internally. A new literacy coordinator will be appointed on a temporary basis due to the promotion of the current post-holder. The academy is in the process of recruiting a new head of mathematics.

There has been an upturn in recruitment of students. The largest Year 7 cohort in the academy's history started in September 2014. The number of students recently recruited into Year 12 is the highest that the academy has had since its inception.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

The proportion of students securing five or more good GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, declined in 2014 and the academy's achievement fell below the government's floor standards, the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. There was a picture of uneven achievement across subjects: the proportion of students making expected progress rose in English, but remained stubbornly low in mathematics. Attainment in history and geography was lower than in previous years, whereas it remained relatively strong in French and religious education. Results in the sixth form fell, with a weaker profile in academic

subjects than in vocational ones. The academy's leaders were disappointed by these results, the causes of which have been carefully analysed.

After a period of considerable turbulence in staffing, roles are now clear and there is a sustained focus across the academy on raising achievement. Students' achievement is carefully tracked and key assessments are externally moderated to ensure that teachers have an accurate view of students' performance. The academy's tracking, based on moderated assessments, indicates that performance in 2015 will be closer to that found nationally. Evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work indicate a better current picture than that painted by 2014 outcomes. Leaders recognise that there is no room for complacency and that the drive to raise achievement for all is the academy's first priority: ambition and achievement for all is the driving principle.

Students' reading skills have been supported by the sustained use of personal reading time. Students think that this has raised their reading stamina and their enjoyment of different text types. Reading intervention programmes have also had a positive impact on students' reading ages. Students read more in different lessons and in English lessons they are specifically taught to read between the lines. Key subject vocabulary is displayed in classrooms and teachers encourage students to make use of it. Students' speaking skills are improving, as they are given more opportunities to provide extended answers and explanations.

Weaknesses remain in students' writing. Too many make simple errors in their use of basic punctuation, including capital letters and full stops. Too many spelling errors persist, even when these have been pointed out by their teachers. The academy has worked to support teachers in improving students' literacy skills, including through the use of literacy sessions in tutorial time; however, there is not yet enough evidence of impact of this on students' work in different subjects. Students' numeracy skills show improvement in mathematics. Work to secure better numeracy skills across the curriculum is at an early stage of development.

### **The quality of teaching**

Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching at the academy continues to improve. Students told inspectors that teachers are expecting more of them, that homework is more frequent and relevant, marking is more detailed and helpful and they are encouraged to think more for themselves. Their positive views were borne out in lessons, for example, when students, supported by 'fertile questions', persevered to explain themes of gender and generation in J B Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*. In mathematics, students enjoyed deducing the laws of indices for themselves from patterns of numbers and were proud to explain their thinking. A similar focus on students using resilience and finding their own strategies to correct work was evident in French, where they demonstrated their mastery of tenses and agreements in correcting a passage about holiday pursuits.

Teachers have reliable data on the performance of students in their classes; however, they do not always adapt tasks sufficiently according to students' different starting points. In mathematics, higher-attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently. Students who arrive at the academy from abroad, sometimes at the very early stages of speaking English, receive effective support to facilitate their integration into mainstream classes.

Teachers' marking is more frequent and constructive across the academy. Teachers work hard to ensure that they give students adequate guidance on how to improve their work. They often ask good questions through marking to encourage students to reflect on how to improve their work. Some marking in English is exemplary in its depth and perception, and students are given good opportunities to respond thoroughly to it. There are examples of literacy errors being unrecognised in marking and not all teachers' comments are fully legible.

'Take away' homework, whereby students select challenges for themselves from a menu of tasks, is proving popular. Senior leaders monitor the setting of homework and teachers take appropriate steps if it is not completed; the academy's homework policy is followed diligently by most students.

The academy has identified some particularly strong teachers who consistently secure high achievement; they are a valuable resource. Plans to use their expertise to support other teachers are at a relatively early stage of development.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is a strength of the academy. No student has missed any time out of lessons due to poor behaviour in the new academic year. There were no fixed-term exclusions in the last academic year. The focus on promoting consistently positive attitudes to learning is apparent. Students look smart, have very positive relationships with their teachers and respect their high quality environment. Occasional off-task behaviour sometimes occurs, particularly in lower-attaining groups, but is generally managed well. Teachers and students are very certain that the academy's consistent processes for tackling any poor behaviour are consistently understood and applied.

Attendance has risen consistently over time. A competitive approach to attendance has had a motivational effect on students and they wear their new attendance badges with pride. The academy has recognised that boys of White British heritage in some year groups have weaker attendance and is monitoring this pattern closely. The academy's work with families and other agencies to support vulnerable students is well developed and effective.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

The strong and decisive leadership of the new Principal is affirmed by staff and students alike. Staff have been persuaded by his vision and subscribe to the policies he has introduced. The academy's understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses is insightful, underpinned by appropriate data.

The review of governance recommended at the section 5 inspection has been completed. It has resulted in a restructuring of the governing body and closer strategic links between senior leaders and governors. A new governor has been appointed with expertise in education, specifically in mathematics. Leaders and governors meet regularly to discuss the academy's progress and priorities; an increased level of challenge is apparent at all levels of leadership and is now recorded. Governors are very aware of the academy's performance, including the impact of pupil premium spending.

Senior leaders hold the middle leaders to account through a process of analysis and review that is scheduled across the academy year. This means that aspects of the academy's work can be interrogated more swiftly and action can be taken more decisively than was previously the case. An appropriate range of programmes is in place to develop the skills of middle leaders; this includes bespoke coaching and development. The quality of middle leadership has improved and there is a much greater awareness of accountability. Middle leaders are receptive to new developments; however, their success in improving practice within their departments is mixed. Teachers who are new to the academy receive good support and induction; they appreciate the mentoring and advice they receive and comment on the very clear structures and policies that are provided to underpin their work.

Leadership of the sixth form has been strengthened by the appointment of key staff who have undertaken an honest self-evaluation. Leaders recognise the urgent need to stem underachievement. The sixth-form curriculum has been adjusted to be relevant and sustainable. Students receive appropriate information, advice and guidance to enable them to make aspirational and realistic choices. Staff are working hard to ensure that students are enrolled on to the correct courses and complete them.

Leaders are aware of the need to ensure that the curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, including British values. The tutorial programme provides opportunities for current affairs to be debated, but not all teachers are confident in leading the discussion of sensitive issues. Academy leaders are considering how best to develop this aspect of the academy's work.

## **External support**

The academy has appointed an improvement partner, who spends a substantial amount of time working with leaders to moderate quality assurance and support middle leadership development. The Principal also receives support from a mentor. Positive relationships have also been formed by the academy with local and regional schools. These relationships will enable the further sharing of good practice.