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29 September 2014

Sue Jones  
Principal  
The Robert Smyth Academy  
Burnmill Road  
Market Harborough  
LE16 7JG

Dear Ms Jones

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Robert Smyth Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils' assessment information is both reliable and accurate
- accelerate the progress of the more able by providing stretching and challenging work in lessons
- develop external partnerships with good or outstanding schools to improve standardisation practices across the academy.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, The Chair and three other members of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Other school documents were scrutinised including pupils' assessment information and monitoring records. Two lessons were observed jointly with the Vice Principal.

## **Context**

Since the last HMI monitoring visit in November 2013, there have been several significant changes to the academy's context and leadership structure. At senior leadership level, the academy has appointed a new Principal, a new external Vice Principal (replacing two deputies) and an additional assistant principal with responsibility for achievement and standards at Key Stage 5. One existing assistant principal with responsibility for performance data, now also has responsibility for curriculum development under his remit. In addition a new head of English has been appointed.

## **Main findings**

The recent 2014 examinations have shown many improvements in students' outcomes, especially in mathematics, science and the sixth form. However, there still remain key areas that the academy identifies, which have not improved sufficiently enough, such as progress in English, the achievement of the more-able students and boys' general underachievement. Analysis of these results has also revealed that in many subject areas there is a significant mismatch between some departmental predictions of students' achievement and the actual results. This indicates a lack of precision with on-going assessment data by some teachers, which, as leaders acknowledge, is of serious concern.

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Teachers use the regular opportunities available to learn from each other and especially from the lead practitioners, who act as coaches. Academy monitoring information shows that teachers use students' assessment data to plan for different ability needs; however, this is executed to varying degrees of success. Leaders do not always use the observations and experiences of students themselves to evaluate of the quality of teaching across the academy. Without this information, leaders may not fully know the impact of teaching on learning, especially for key groups such as boys and the more-able students.

The restructuring of senior and middle leadership posts in the academy, introduced by you, has improved the clarity of roles and responsibility. This has led to clearer lines of accountability, which are now closely aligned to performance management targets. Subject leaders carry out their monitoring duties regularly and use departmental meetings to share good practice; this has contributed to better teaching across the academy. Governors have also improved their effectiveness; for example, they now have separate committees to support and challenge each faculty area, which have led to improved focused visits to school; reports to the governing body are both insightful and challenging to leaders of the school.

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

### **External support**

You currently receive limited support from a school improvement partner. The academy does not access support from other providers. This has limited their opportunity to standardise students' assessments and learn from best practice. The Principal is fully aware of this matter and has already initiated links with a 'good' school, whose student outcomes are consistently good, especially in English.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire, the DfE Academies Advisers Unit and The Education Funding Agency (EFA).

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**