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16 October 2014

Mr Andrew Goulty  
Executive Headteacher  
The Featherstone Academy  
Pontefract Road  
Featherstone  
Pontefract  
West Yorkshire  
WF7 5AJ

Dear Mr Goulty

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Featherstone Academy**

Following my visit with Jane Willis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 October 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Chair of the School Improvement Board and the Corporate Director, Children and Young People for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better across all subjects, but especially in mathematics, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of the quality and amount of work students of all abilities can do, especially the most and least able, making sure teachers plan questions that will make students think hard and give extended answers
  - quickly completing the training of staff to ensure they are making accurate checks on students' progress and then using this information to plan work at the right level for students of different abilities
  - making sure students' writing and presentation skills are developed effectively
  - ensuring tasks are engaging and help students develop the ability to think things through for themselves.
  
- Rapidly improve all students' progress and raise attainment, but especially for boys, students with special educational needs and those eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, by:
  - developing high aspirations for students' achievement by consolidating the new system of setting targets
  - arranging an external review of the use of pupil premium funding and acting rapidly to implement the recommendations in order to close the gap in performance between disadvantaged students and others in the academy.
  
- Improve attendance and reduce the number of students who are persistently absent by embedding the recent improvements to the academy's work to promote good attendance.
  
- Take swift action to improve students' behaviour by:
  - improving students' attitudes to midday and supply staff
  - checking that staff, including supply teachers, and students stick to the rules about behaviour in lessons and are accountable for a rapid improvement in behaviour
  - eliminating anti-social behaviour, such as smoking, and reduce the number of students who come out of lessons without good reason.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors so that they can secure rapid and sustained improvement by:
  - continuing to develop middle leaders' skills so that they are consistently using the information from the checks they do on the quality of teaching and students' work to plan for rapid improvement
  - widening the range of courses and subjects available to students to ensure they develop appropriate skills and raise their aspirations
  - undertaking an external review of governance and implementing its recommendations
  - securing the long-term future of the academy by appointing a permanent Principal and other senior leaders.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 October 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders, new and experienced teachers, students, governors and a representative of the trust.

### **Context**

The Chair of the Governing Body at the time of the inspection and a number of other governors have resigned since the last monitoring inspection. The governing body has been replaced by a School Improvement Board (SIB), appointed by the academy's sponsor, The Rodillian Academy Trust. A new local governing body is being recruited and trained to take over responsibility for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning when the academy comes out of special measures.

Of the 28 teachers at the academy, 12 joined over the summer.

The academy changed its name from the Purston E-Act Academy to the Featherstone Academy at the beginning of this term.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Examination results in the summer were disappointing. The new leadership team had no time to make a difference to the outcomes. Data tracking students' progress in 2013/14 and predictions based on the data have proved unreliable. New systems for tracking and assessment that have proved successful at The Rodillian Academy Trust are now in place and students are set more challenging targets.

Work in books and visits to lessons show that the vast majority of students are learning well and have a pride in their work. The quality and quantity of written work show promise.

Breakfast sessions to improve the reading skills of disadvantaged Year 7 students, funded by the pupil premium (additional government funding), are already helping to build confidence and improve skills.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has improved markedly since the inspection. Students say that the quality is much better and all their lessons are taught by permanent staff who explain things well. Teachers have established effective routines that ensure lessons get off to a good start. A wide variety of teaching strategies are used well to engage students and promote active learning. Initiatives to motivate boys, such as introducing an element of competition, are used effectively. In the best lessons students are encouraged to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning.

The new marking policy is embedded and students are increasingly reflecting on their learning, completing corrections and responding to suggestions made by the teacher. Students know what they need to do to improve their work and there are no wide variations in the quality of marking.

Teachers have access to a good range of professional development, provided both internally and externally, and they are able to personalise the offer to match their needs. Staff also regularly share best practice in their team meetings.

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

Staff and students agree that behaviour in and out of lessons is much better. Behaviour around the school at break and lunch times is orderly and calm. Students behave well in lessons and the behaviour policy is applied consistently with very few exceptions. Teachers say that behaviour is no longer an issue and they are free to concentrate on teaching and learning in lessons. There are no students out of class without good reason and smoking on site has almost been eradicated. Strict adherence to the behaviour policy has, however, resulted in a rise in the number of exclusions.

Attendance is monitored accurately and often. Initiatives have been introduced to promote and reward good attendance and it is a priority topic in tutor time. Much work has been done to make sure that parents appreciate the importance of regular attendance and the academy is taking a much stricter approach to holidays in term time. Persistent absentees are monitored closely and dealt with on an individual basis, using other agencies where appropriate. It is too early to see the full impact of the new initiatives on attendance figures as they are being affected by the rise in the number of exclusions. Punctuality is much improved both in the morning and at the start of lessons with students moving promptly and purposefully to classes.

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

Leaders at all levels demonstrate very strong and determined leadership that is transforming the academy. They have clear priorities, well-planned strategies and the enthusiasm and energy to drive improvements at a fast pace. The executive headteacher is spearheading the improvement and has a clear long-term view of where the academy is going. He has gathered a capable team around him and together they are driving developments forward.

The Chair of the Trust Board is also chair of the SIB. He is a National Leader of Governance and is developing a system of governance that is fit for purpose across the expanding trust as well as in individual academies. He is using his expertise to make sure that the new local governing body is carefully chosen and trained well. Meanwhile, the SIB, which is made up of experienced governors from the trust, is ensuring that the academy's journey out of special measures is tightly monitored and its leaders are held accountable. The new systems for monitoring students' performance and that of staff are robust. Pupil premium funding is carefully directed and its impact is evaluated.

The curriculum has been strengthened and adapted to meet new national expectations. The Year 11 curriculum has been modified to give students more opportunities to achieve qualifications at Level 2. The curriculum for Year 7 to 10 has been redesigned to better meet students' needs and provide access to a broader range of GCSE options. The school day has also been changed. By creating an extra period at the end of the day, the academy can provide more enhancement activities, such as sports and vocational tasters. Supervised workshops are also available to give students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, opportunity to do homework in conducive surroundings with help, if necessary, from teachers. The new staggered lunchtimes are having a positive effect on behaviour.

The new leadership team has continued to work hard to build stronger links with parents and the local community. Leaders have received positive feedback from within the community and attendance at parents' evenings is much improved.

### **External support**

The academy is receiving excellent support from the trust. Teachers are benefiting from opportunities to share best practice, coaching support and help with the moderation of coursework. The trust also provides additional staffing and a development programme for newly qualified teachers across the trust. Academy leaders are receiving invaluable support at all levels.