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16 October 2014

Mr James Kerfoot  
Headteacher  
Childwall Sports & Science Academy  
Queen's Drive  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L15 6XZ

Dear Mr Kerfoot

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Childwall Sports & Science Academy, Liverpool**

Following my visit to your school on 15 October 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection.

The school should take immediate action to:

- urgently strengthen current initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 4, so that students achieve their potential and are well-equipped to go on to the next stage in their lives
- improve the effectiveness of procedures aimed at promoting good behaviour so that all students show respect for each other and for their teachers
- refine the action plan so that it identifies measurable success criteria with clear timescales for rapid improvement in students' achievement
- ensure all teachers promote the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, students, a representative of the academy's sponsors and members of the governing body to discuss action taken since the previous inspection. In addition, I spoke to the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority on the telephone. The action plan was evaluated. I spoke to a number of students informally at break time and took a walk around the academy. I also scrutinised a range of documentation, including information on students' current progress and initiatives to improve teaching. I spent some time examining students' work in their books, both on my own and with members of staff, and I also considered schemes of work for English, history and mathematics.

## **Context**

There have been substantial changes in staffing since the previous inspection. The former head of the English department has taken up an alternative position in the school and the assistant principal has taken direct control over English. The head of the science department has stepped down from his role. There has been a new head of department appointed to oversee humanities and languages. Four new teachers have been appointed in science and two teachers are soon to be appointed to the mathematics department. These changes in staffing have, in part, been the consequence of senior leaders' actions to challenge underperformance. There have also been some changes to the governing body since the inspection.

The academy is at the present time in the process of changing its sponsor. This is because leaders of the academy do not feel they have received adequate support and challenge from its current sponsor, Academies Enterprise Trust. Since the previous inspection, the academy has received the results of public examinations taken by students at the end of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

## **Main findings**

To be fair to senior leaders of the academy, they have embarked on a far-ranging and dynamic programme of school improvement since the previous inspection. The action plan, with some further refinement, has the potential to be a useful tool to steer the academy forward. However, the disappointing GCSE results for 2014 represent a considerable setback to the academy rapidly becoming a good school. So far, actions to tackle the underlying causes of students' poor achievement across the academy have not had time to have sufficient impact.

At the time of the previous inspection, the academy's information on students' progress presented a far rosier picture than was actually the case. This was because this information was inaccurate and was not substantiated when the results came in.

Senior leaders, including governors, now have a more accurate picture regarding how well students are doing and there are the very early signs of improvement in some subjects, such as mathematics.

On a more optimistic note, strong leadership of the sixth form and changes to the curriculum ensured that students in Key Stage 5 were enrolled on courses that were far better suited to their abilities and interests. As a result, examination performance rose in 2014, representing a substantial improvement in students' achievement and prospects for their future. Students' attendance in all year groups has also improved. These signs of improvement demonstrate that the leadership of the academy has the capacity for further improvement.

Procedures to hold subject leaders to account for progress in their subject have been tightened up considerably since the previous inspection. A strong programme of leadership training has been introduced to improve the skills of middle leaders in running their areas of responsibility.

Senior leaders have identified students' low level of aspiration as one of the stumbling blocks to rapid improvement. They have introduced a series of initiatives to tackle this. For example, form tutor groups have been named after top universities to promote aspiration and more able students are now actively encouraged to follow a curriculum that is better suited to their abilities. It is still too early to assess whether these initiatives are having the desired impact.

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have intensified the academy's programme to improve the quality of teaching. For example, a 'markathon', where all teachers stayed after school to mark work together, was successful in highlighting best practice and helping teachers to improve. During the inspection, I saw examples of excellent marking; for example, in a Year 12 student's sociology exercise book, the targets for improvement that the teacher outlined were genuinely related to the knowledge and skills that are relevant to this subject. The marking in this book demonstrated strong subject knowledge on the part of the teacher and the comments made were a considerable support to the student concerned. Equally, assiduous marking in geography was to the point and demonstrated teachers' high expectations; as a result, students' work was of a good standard. However, weak marking, for example in English, demonstrated that good practice in this regard is still too inconsistent.

During my visit, I found that progress in English, across all year groups and abilities, gives cause for concern. The leadership of this subject has been changed in order to tackle this, but there remain weaknesses in teaching that are proving a challenge to sort out. The outline of work to be covered in English is too vague and does not show sufficiently clearly how the work builds on what students have already learned. In addition, there is insufficient guidance given to teachers as to how they should adapt their teaching to suit the needs and abilities of students, which, incidentally, was one of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Teachers' low expectations in English, as demonstrated in both the scheme of work and in students' books, remain an impediment to students making better progress in this subject and, furthermore, to the academy's rapid improvement. In fact, many students' weak skills in reading and writing are holding them back from making good progress across the board. Senior leaders have not yet tackled this problem with sufficient urgency.

As was picked up by the inspection team at the time of the previous inspection, students' behaviour is just not good enough. During my visit, I saw examples of rudeness and utter disrespect to teachers that interrupted lessons and got in the way of other students learning. The school's ongoing efforts to sort out poor behaviour have not yet gone far enough and, as a result, some students think that they can get away with it. Students I spoke to during the inspection complained to me that they still get called names, or have to put up with disruption to their lessons, and this is unacceptable.

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**

Senior leaders, including governors, do not feel that they have received adequate support from their sponsors and as a result procedures are well under way to finding alternative strategic partners. The academy is now starting to engage more willingly with the local authority, but as this development is at a very early stage, there is as yet no clear evidence of impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant

### **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation

- 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) if the school is a non-maintained special school [[hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk)]