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16 October 2014

Maria Nightingale  
The Nuneaton Academy  
Radnor Drive  
Nuneaton  
CV10 7PD

Dear Mrs Nightingale

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

Following my visit with Joseph Skivington and Stephen Daniels, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 14–15 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

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 Education Funding Agency, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Cc. Chair of the Governing Body

Cc. Local authority

Cc. The Secretary of State

Cc. The Education Funding Agency (EFA)

Cc. DfE - Academies Advisers Unit

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, and so raise achievement, especially in mathematics and science, by ensuring that:
  - students are given activities which interest and challenge them
  - teachers have high expectations of students and ensure that they take pride in their work and complete all tasks set, including homework
  - the marking of students' work gives them clear guidance on how to improve, in accordance with the academy's marking policy
  - teachers use data on students' current progress to ensure that the work they set is always hard enough to move their learning forward.
  
- Improve the behaviour of students by:
  - ensuring that less learning is disrupted by off-task behaviour in lessons and the amount of time spent by senior staff responding to incidents is reduced
  - improving the attendance of students in those groups where it is below the national average.
  
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
  - ensuring that new leaders and teachers clearly understand their roles and responsibilities through an effective induction programme
  - ensuring that all leaders receive training to become more effective in monitoring the quality of teaching
  - ensuring that policies and procedures are more consistently applied across the academy
  - monitoring more closely the impact of the pupil premium funding on improving the achievement of eligible pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should also be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

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

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, other senior and middle leaders, a group of teachers, several groups of students, the Chair of the Local Governing Body and some of its other members, and two representatives from the multi-academy trust.

### **Context**

Since my last visit, the academy has undergone a restructure of senior and middle leadership and has appointed a new vice Principal, a new assistant Principal and a new curriculum leader for mathematics.

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

The achievement of students in the academy remains unacceptably low. In 2014, 33% of students achieved five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics. This is significantly below the national average and well below the government's 2013 floor standards for attainment. Although rates of progress in English are likely to be broadly in line with the national averages for 2014, this is not the case for mathematics. There is a similar picture of low achievement in the sixth form.

Since June of this year, accurate identification of key priorities and a substantial increase in the pace of targeted action is beginning to tackle the causes of long-term underachievement in the academy. Following recognition that previous records of students' progress were too optimistic, you ensured that this was rectified by a re-assessment of all students. This has resulted in a much more accurate view of students' attainment, particularly in mathematics. We agreed that it would be useful to introduce regular external checks on the accuracy of assessment to ensure that this is maintained.

The new system for monitoring students' progress from September of this year is robust. This has improved the academy's ability to identify rapidly any underperformance by groups of students to inform decisions about additional support. However, there has not yet been time for this to have had a measurable impact on improving students' progress. This is particularly the case in relation to closing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and their peers.

Conversely, students in Year 7 who enter the academy with lower than expected attainment in English have been supported well through the more established

literacy programme. Many of these students have made good progress in improving their reading and writing skills from when they joined the academy.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is not improving quickly enough. Too much teaching remains inadequate or requires improvement so that, over time, students are not making the progress that they should in many subjects. Cumulative records of the quality of teaching in the academy are too generous. You are aware of this and have introduced systems and processes to ensure that the quality of teaching is judged over time and is closely linked to the progress of students. The calendar of monitoring activities, introduced just before my last visit, has had a positive impact on morale and teachers expressed their appreciation that they now know how and when they will be held accountable.

Nonetheless, there remain key areas for development that have yet to be secured. For instance, too many teachers continue to have low expectations of what students can achieve. This is because teachers are not yet routinely using assessment information to guide their planning. Where teaching is weak, work set is often not challenging enough for the most-able students or is too hard for the least-able students. Consequently, students become bored or frustrated and, in some cases, disengage from learning and become involved in low-level disruption. As a result of these weaknesses, significant numbers of students do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Where teaching is good, the behaviour of students is good. Inspectors saw examples of engaging activities that were well matched to students' abilities because a range of approaches and strategies ensured access for all. In these cases teachers had planned carefully to ensure that students were supported to make progress and used questioning well to check their understanding. Your focus on developing questioning across the academy is now ensuring that good practice in this aspect of teaching is being shared more effectively.

Although all teachers are now marking students' work regularly, the quality of advice provided varies widely both across and within subjects. In the best examples, students were told what they had done well and provided with clear advice on what they needed to do next to improve their work. However, in too many cases, marking was limited to corrections and general directions to improve spelling or neatness. Despite this, many books contained incomplete or scruffy work. Although teachers often asked students to rectify this, there was little evidence that these students had responded or that teachers followed things up when they failed to do so. We agreed that it would be useful to revisit the academy's marking policy so that there is a clear requirement for all teachers to provide 'next steps' that are clearly linked to skills, knowledge and understanding that will support further progress. We also agreed

that the requirement for students to respond to marking and for teachers to check that they had done so needs to be strengthened.

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

Behaviour is improving. This is a direct consequence of the new policies and procedures that you have introduced. Although low-level disruption persists in some classrooms, an increasing number of students are now challenging those who cause the disruption because they want to learn and understand that it is their right to be able to do so.

Behaviour around the academy is usually calm and orderly. An isolated incident that occurred at the end of the academy day was dealt with rapidly and effectively by leaders, and students report that this is the norm. Many said they now felt proud to attend the academy and attributed this to your leadership and approachability. They say that you and your leaders are a visible and constant presence around the academy, that staff are now more consistent in applying the behaviour policy and that expectations of behaviour are much higher than they were. However, they are also clear, as are the academy's leaders, that they want it to improve further.

Attendance remains a significant issue for the academy because, for some students, frequent absence is a very real barrier to learning. Inspectors noted low numbers in many classes. For instance, in one lesson where students should have been undertaking a controlled assessment, a significant proportion had been absent for earlier lessons and therefore had not completed the necessary preparation.

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

Since my last visit the restructuring of senior and middle leadership has been agreed and implemented and this is increasing the capacity for improvement substantially. Roles and responsibilities are now very clear as a result of the systems and procedures established for the start of this academic year. However, because these changes are very recent, there is not yet evidence of a significant impact on improving outcomes for students.

Middle leaders are now beginning to shoulder the appropriate level of responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. They now know how they will be held accountable for students' progress and how they should hold their own staff accountable, and are increasingly able to do so. This is because they have been provided with good-quality support and training as well as a higher level of challenge than has previously been the case. For instance, training is underway to ensure that middle leaders are more effective in monitoring the quality of teaching. The new recording and assessment handbook places middle leaders at the heart of the processes to ensure the rigour and accuracy of assessment. All middle leaders

spoken with agreed that they felt much more empowered to 'do the job' because they were now able to take decisions about making improvements in their subject areas within the framework provided by academy leaders. Again, the impact of the new structures for this aspect of leadership is yet to be seen on improving students' rates of progress.

Leadership of the sixth form is improving. Although it is too early to measure impact, systems have been strengthened this term to ensure that staff have higher expectations of students, supported by closer monitoring of progress. There has been a review of entry requirements to the sixth form so that courses and qualifications provided are better matched to students' abilities. Academy leaders recognise that numbers in the sixth form are very low and are developing appropriate plans to increase the range and quality of provision through creating partnerships across the academy trust.

On your appointment as Principal last term, you quickly identified problems with the curriculum provision in Key Stage 4 and began work to ensure that all students had opportunities to make at least good progress. However, this took significantly longer than you expected. As a result the final curriculum for Year 10 will not be in place until after the half term, further delaying the academy's ability to measure impact of actions on student achievement. We agreed that an early review of the new programme of study for Year 10 would be essential, so that any amendments that may be required are identified and implemented rapidly.

You have responded positively to comments made at the last inspection concerning the need to develop a more strategic overview of the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of students. As a result, this has been developed and a detailed 'map' of provision will be in place before January 2015. However, we also agreed that some aspects would need strengthening, particularly in relation to social development.

Governors have responded to the reviews of governance and pupil premium spending quickly and have worked hard to ensure that the additional expertise they required has been secured through careful recruitment. They have a much clearer understanding of the academy's performance and what needs to improve. As a result of effective training, they are now much more confident in challenging leaders through effective questioning. This is clearly demonstrated in minutes of governors' meetings.

### **External support**

The multi-academy trust continues to support the academy and its leaders effectively. Trustees are aware that the time taken to address leadership issues in the early months following inspection has led to slower progress initially than they would have wished. However, since the appointment of the new interim Principal in



June, academy leaders, governors and trust leaders have been able to work together effectively to focus on the key areas for improvement. Consequently, there is measurable progress in some areas, most notably in the improvements achieved so far in behaviour.