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12 November 2014

Barry Hersom  
Principal  
Colchester Academy  
Hawthorn Avenue  
Colchester  
CO4 3JL

Dear Mr Hersom

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Colchester Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 11 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in July 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the sponsor. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan were evaluated. Short visits were made to lessons in several departments. Students' work was scrutinised in lessons. Some of the academy's documentation was looked at, including assessment data, reports to governors and safeguarding records.

### **Context**

Eight teachers, including one senior leader and two team leaders, have left the academy since the inspection. They have been replaced by six new teachers, including some who are newly qualified.

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

Your plan is focused on improving teaching so that achievement rises across the academy. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths within the academy, and where challenges remain. For example, the variation in quality of teaching between departments is reducing because leaders are channelling their support more precisely. This support is increasingly tailored to the needs of individual teachers and is having a considerable impact on departments such as English, where GCSE results in 2014 were low. Students' work in English is showing clear signs of improvement and teachers are accurately assessing the progress they are making. Basic skills such as spelling, grammar and punctuation are improving across the academy. Regular staff training on promoting literacy in all subjects has raised teachers' expectations of the standard of students' writing.

Academy leaders are making better use of assessment information. Improved systems are in place and senior leaders are using the resulting information to target support to students who are underachieving. Information is also being gathered about the impact of other key initiatives such as the new behaviour policy. This is having a positive impact and attitudes to learning are largely positive. Levels of attendance are rising and the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is much lower than in the recent past. Students say that they enjoy most subjects and are benefiting from better teaching.

An external review of the work of the governing body, provided by a representative of the local authority, is nearing its conclusion. A resulting action plan is being written but there are also early indications of impact. Governors are becoming more focused on the most important aspects of the academy's work – how well teaching is promoting learning. They are asking better questions and some are spending more time in the academy. The governing body is also making effective use of external consultants to supplement the evaluations of senior leaders.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Essex and the Academies Advisers Unit. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Cc. Chair of the Governing Body  
Cc. Local authority  
Cc. DfE - Academies Advisers Unit