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John Cox  
Head of Academy  
Arnold Hill Academy  
Gedling Road  
Arnold  
Nottingham  
NG5 6NZ

Dear Mr Cox

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Arnold Hill Academy**

Following my visit to your school with Tony Gallagher, HMI, on 18–19 November 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in December 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The governor's statement of action is fit for purpose

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State [see list below for whom to copy this to], the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Nottingham, The Education Funding Agency (EFA) and DfE, Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The post-inspection letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body or equivalent
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013**

- Improve teaching and raise achievement, particularly in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - the differing needs of individual students are met more effectively
  - teachers in all lessons provide challenging activities that demonstrate higher expectations for all students, and particularly the most able
  - all teachers regularly check students' understanding so that misconceptions are corrected and timely support is offered to those who need it most
  - positive attitudes to learning are encouraged consistently.
- Use pupil premium funding more effectively to close the gap in achievement between these and other students.
- Improve behaviour by successfully addressing low-level disruption in lessons, so that positive attitudes to learning are consistent.
- Improve leadership and management by regularly reviewing the academy's performance more critically, leading to areas of concern being addressed quickly.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the academy. An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on insert date of inspection**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the head of the academy, who is the most senior leader in the absence of the Principal, and other senior leaders, some middle leaders, groups of students from Year 8 and 10, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors and the representative from the proposed sponsor. Seven lessons were observed and shorter visits were made to a range of lessons in different subject areas. These observations of students' learning were carried out with the assistant principal in charge of teaching. The inspector also scrutinised a number of academy documents, including the academy improvement plan, assessment information, including the impact of the pupil premium, academy reports to governors and the safeguarding policy, including the single central register. Over 120 responses were received from an Ofsted staff questionnaire, which were considered by the inspector.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection there have been a number of staff changes. The Principal has resigned and 17 new teachers started at the academy from September. The position of Principal remains vacant. Two support staff have also been recruited. Governors have selected a suitable sponsor, The Trent Academies Group, and they are in the final stages of securing this partnership.

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

Leadership at all levels has lost direction and clarity. Precious time has been wasted. This has set the academy back from its course to have the designation of serious weakness removed. Turbulence in the leadership of the academy has meant that important monitoring activities to assure improvements have broken down because there is no clear steer from those at the top. The leadership team is large and work carried by them, whilst well-meaning, is not joined up well enough, leading to duplication of effort and lack of accountability.

The ways in which the academy collects information on how well it is doing have recently been reviewed but still do not provide an adequate basis for objective analysis. Leaders have not established, articulated and communicated the key priority areas for improvement or their non-negotiable expectations clearly enough, so that all staff understand what is expected of them. This has led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching not being tackled robustly. The quality of marking in some subject areas remains poor, especially in the lower sets. Some of the marking is also indicative of an underlying low expectation of students amongst some staff. This has not been addressed strongly enough by leaders at all levels and no one is clear about who is responsible for holding poor teacher performance to account.

The 2014 examination results were disappointing. The results in many subject areas did not reflect the predictions the academy expected. The rate of improvement in most subjects is too slow. The English results show that the school had failed to ensure that students made sufficient progress from their different starting points. In mathematics, however, the results were in line with teachers' expectations and represented an improvement compared to last year. The progress that students made in this subject is close the national expectations. Reliable assessments of the current Year 11 show that in mathematics, their achievement is likely to improve even further. Assessments in English remain unreliable, as steps to ensure their validity are still underway. In 2014 the most able in English made more progress compared to last year, although they are still below national expectations, while in mathematics this group exceeded national for expected progress but remains below for more than expected progress. The gap in achievement between those eligible for the pupil premium and others remains wide. In 2014 this gap represented a grade and a half behind their peers in mathematics and in English over a grade. This was no different to the gap in outcomes in 2013. The proportion of pupil premium students who achieved 5 A\*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics did increase significantly from last year, but it is still not good enough. Leaders' review of the strategies that had been implemented to improve the progress of pupil premium students and the most able is incomplete and confusing in part. Leaders are therefore not clear about the impact of the different actions taken which has made. This has made the critical job of holding them to account by governors and other stakeholders very difficult. This lack of clarity and confusion over roles and responsibilities, has led to a gradual loss of faith in leadership by the majority of staff.

There is evidence that behaviour and attitudes to learning has improved. Inspectors mostly saw students respectful and cooperative in the classroom and around the school. However, students say that behaviour is not managed consistently and staff agree. Leaders are not analysing trends in behaviour well enough and acting on their findings. Leaders do not connect their information about the behaviour and the achievement of students, especially for those supported by the pupil premium. Consequently, they do not always have a clear overview of underlying reasons why some students may be underachieving.

Careers information education and guidance (CIAG) is currently subject to review with managers seeking to establish a more comprehensive programme. A revised curriculum, designed to meet the learning needs of students across Years 7-11 is being introduced. It encompasses personal skills, attitudes about employment and next steps at 16. The curriculum is coherent but untested. Work experience is already provided for some Year 10 students. Young people progress well at 16 and very few are designated as not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Students identified as in need of support are provided with individual guidance sessions which help them explore their post-16 options. Students receive good timely information to support their subject choices at Key Stage 4. The options process helps them learn about decision making and opens up the debate about

career routes. Year 11 students are generally well informed about post-16 options and have knowledge of other providers. The guidance they receive is impartial. Students gain much from mock interviews with employers including preparation of a CV, a formal interview and feedback. Students rise to this challenge and see its relevance.

Exciting opportunities exist for students to visit employers; the most effective visits include information about, and the promotion of, apprenticeships. Teachers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and vocational areas are creative in how they develop students' knowledge and understanding of the workplace. Their approach provides a useful template for other departments. Teachers in the sixth form are equally alert to the need to challenge young people at all levels and concentrate well on preparing them for the next stage. However despite a broad range of opportunities, CIAG is not sufficiently underpinned by a clear strategy. Benchmarking is underdeveloped and quality assurance is insufficient to enable managers to assess its impact or identify areas for improvement. Links with the local CIAG providers and support groups are underdeveloped and continuing professional development for key staff is too limited.

The Chair of Governors is new to the post and, along with the other members, has made important decisions about the future of the academy. Their high expectations of standards for the academy and commitment to improve the outcomes of all students has led to them seeking an outstanding trust sponsor with a strong track record of improvement. They continue to improve their monitoring activities, which includes link governors meeting with key leaders to ask searching questions about improvements and evidence of impact. The information they have been provided with by academy leaders has not always been as clear as it should be but this has been partly due to the poor management information systems. They have ambition and recognise the need ensure strong leadership in the academy and to learn from best practice in governance.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The quality of marking and feedback in English is showing marked improvement compared to last year
- The range of personalised support for students has improved, which has contributed to better engagement in the classroom.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Target-setting lacks clarity for both staff, students and parents.
- Quality assurance and other monitoring activities by subject leaders and other leaders are not impacting on the quality of teaching quickly and consistently enough across the academy.

## **External support**

The academy has already begun working closely with their proposed sponsor, The Trent Academies Group, who are currently carrying out their due diligence exercises, prior to the commencement of formal sponsorship.

Following the judgment at the first monitoring inspection the governors have now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose.