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27 November 2014

Ms Mary Gould  
The Head of School  
The Matthew Arnold School  
Kingston Road  
Staines  
Surrey  
TW18 1PF

Dear Ms Gould

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Matthew Arnold School**

Following my visit to your academy on 26 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2014.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, one of the executive headteachers, the Chair of the Interim Academy Board and a group of subject leaders. I evaluated the Bourne Education Trust's statement of action and your development plan. I also examined a range of documentation. You accompanied me on a tour of the academy which enabled me to go into lessons, talk to students and look at their work.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, significant changes have been made to the governance and leadership of the academy. The governing body has been replaced and trustees of the Bourne Education Trust, who was working with the previous governing body, have established an interim academy board (IAB). The previous headteacher has left the academy. Two executive headteachers, both National Leaders in Education, are in place, and the post of head of school has been created. Since 1 September the academy has been supported by the Bourne Education Trust

which is a multi-academy trust led by Epsom and Ewell High School. It is proposed that, as of 1 December, the academy will take on sponsorship from Epsom and Ewell High School.

There have been considerable changes to the staff since the section 5 inspection. Twenty six staff have left the academy. Many teachers, including several with leadership roles, and a few teaching assistants have been replaced. Some of the posts are currently filled on a temporary basis.

Leaders have terminated the sixth form arrangement with Strode's Sixth Form College, although the partnership will continue to allow a group of students in Year 13 to complete their course.

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

Following the inspection in July 2014, leaders from the Bourne Education Trust acted decisively and rapidly to address its findings and secure improvement.

The executive headteacher has significantly strengthened the leadership of the academy by seconding leaders from within the trust, who have a secure understanding and experience of how to bring about rapid improvements. This has included your appointment as head of school. Your determination to move the academy forward has been noted by parents, staff and students. In addition, a number of experienced middle leaders and subject experts have been seconded to the academy. Their capacity to lead teams effectively is beginning to yield success, particularly in English where there have been improvements in teaching. These middle leaders are being ably supported by senior staff from the trust and partner schools.

The new leadership team, supported by the trust, has brought much needed stability to the academy. You have instilled in staff an ambitious vision for the future of the academy. It was valuable to see that students were benefiting from your higher and more consistent expectations during my visit. Staff appreciate the high visibility of senior staff throughout the day to develop fully the higher expectations of student conduct.

Senior leaders and officers of the Bourne Education Trust have put together a comprehensive statement of action and academy development plan which appropriately address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. However, some adjustments need to be made to strengthen the development plan so that it can be used to measure the progress being made towards targets. In particular, the plan lacks success indicators for each year group in the academy against which progress can be judged at clear stages. You have wisely acknowledged this and have begun to make the necessary amendments. You

have agreed to identify which leaders are responsible for carrying out the actions in the plan, who will be responsible for checking that the required changes have taken place and how these actions will be evaluated. You acknowledge that actions to strengthen safeguarding policies and practice in the plans have been slow to get started. This is now being addressed.

Immediately after the inspection you prioritised the need to improve the quality of teaching. Some under-performing teachers have either left the academy or are being supported to improve. Although a significant number of teachers left at the end of the summer term, the executive headteacher ensured that the academy was fully staffed in September by recruiting new teachers and running training programmes for many of them during the summer.

There is now a comprehensive training programme for all staff led by experienced leaders and specialists from the trust. Newly qualified teachers, those who were trained overseas and middle leaders have ongoing support and professional development plans which are beginning to make a difference. However, you have acknowledged that there is still work to be done to recruit more specialist, permanent science teachers.

Systems for gathering information in the academy have been strengthened and useful data about students are now available to teachers and support staff. Leaders have made their expectations clear to teachers that this information should be used to:

- plan lessons which meet the learning needs of all students
- check the achievement of students to identify those who may not be progressing as well as they could
- provide additional support to enable students vulnerable to underachievement to make better progress.

Although leaders currently judge the quality of teaching to be rapidly improving, with so many teachers new in post it is too soon to judge the impact of improvements on students' achievement.

During my tour of the academy, students were complying with teachers' expectations of behaviour, responding positively and engaging with their learning. The academy was calm, orderly and no incidents of disruptive behaviour were observed during this visit. The emphasis that you and other leaders have placed on improving behaviour is beginning to take effect.

Your efforts to improve achievement have been focused on Year 11 and you are striving to narrow the attainment gap for disadvantaged students. In order to check how well all students in the academy are progressing, you recognise the need to accurately assess students' work. Leaders have correctly taken immediate steps to

standardise teachers' assessments in some subjects. This will provide a much needed baseline from which students' progress can be measured with certainty.

A local authority-led safeguarding audit has recently taken place. As a consequence, a number of steps are planned to strengthen the academy's policies and procedures.

The recommended review of governance was not required due to the formation of the IAB. Newly appointed members of the IAB bring considerable expertise and relevant experience. They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvements. The Chair of the IAB has a clear ambition for the rapid removal from special measures.

Members of the IAB have sensibly commissioned external support from an improvement adviser to verify leaders' judgements on how well the academy is improving. In addition, the IAB has commissioned the local authority school improvement service to provide feedback on the effectiveness of leaders' implementation of their improvement plans.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I recommend that the academy only seeks to appoint newly qualified teachers following consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Academy Board and the Director of Children's Services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**