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26 November 2014

Bhupinder Kondal  
Principal  
Oldknow Academy  
Oldknow Road  
Small Heath  
Birmingham  
B10 0HU

Dear Mrs Kondal

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Oldknow Academy**

Following my visit with Rachel Howie Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 24–25 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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 school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

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 Chair of the Trustees, the Academies Advisers Unit and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of the Governing Body

cc. Local authority

cc. The Secretary of State

cc. DfE - Academies Advisers Unit

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014.**

- As a matter of urgency, ensure a full review of governance with a particular focus on the suitability of those acting as governors.
- Review the financial probity at the academy and employment procedures.
- Secure stability in the leadership of the academy.
- Improve the quality of education by ensuring that a broad and balanced curriculum, including religious education, equips pupils to live and work in a multi-cultural, multi-faith and democratic Britain and to develop tolerance towards peoples of all faiths and all cultures.
  
- Safeguard students better by:
  - improving staff and governors' understanding of, and commitment to, their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe
  - ensuring that staff and governors undertake extensive training in how to identify risk to pupils from extreme or radical views
  - ensuring any plans to alter the ethos, culture and values of the academy are widely consulted on and better understood.
  
- Improve communication with parents so that they understand why decisions are made in the academy.
- Ensure that all staff are consulted about aspects of academy life and proposed changes.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24 – 25 November 2014.**

### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, senior leaders, groups of pupils and three representatives from the board of trustees. Inspectors observed parts of lessons and carried out a book scrutiny. A range of documents was scrutinised, including action plans, information about progress made by pupils, attendance records, staff questionnaires and records showing how the academy cares for its pupils and keeps them safe.

### **Context**

The vice-principal and one assistant principal are absent from the academy. An associate principal has been appointed on a temporary basis by the trustees. A business manager is due to start working at the academy on 1 December 2014. There is high staff absence, most of which is covered by temporary supply staff.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

The test results for Year 6 in 2014 show that the progress made by pupils overall deteriorated from the previous year. Standards in reading and mathematics rose but there was a considerable decline in the standards in writing. Academy leaders did not predict this decline because the systems in place to check pupils' progress and attainment have not been rigorous enough. Standards reached by the most-able pupils also declined this year.

Teachers are now regularly checking pupils' attainment and know how many pupils are working at age-related expectations. However, there are no checks being made on the progress pupils make. As a result, it is unclear how well pupils are doing. The data recorded for all pupils in the summer was not moderated and leaders report that the data is inaccurate. Consequently, it is difficult to judge the current achievement of pupils across the academy. The lack of clarity about pupils' achievement means teachers do not accurately know where to pitch learning for all groups of pupils. As a result, some pupils are not challenged enough, especially the most-able.

Progress of disadvantaged students eligible for pupil premium support is equally unclear. This was not monitored or evaluated last year.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are often not high enough and as a result, pupils are not making enough progress in lessons. This is most common where teachers are temporary supply staff.

Generally the teaching of English and mathematics is better than in other subjects. This is because teachers now make it clear what they expect pupils to learn and support and challenge pupils to improve their work. During the inspection some effective teaching was seen. In these lessons pupils made good progress because teachers used good questioning skills which encouraged pupils to think and extend their answers. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lessons pupils were asked to describe in detail how they had arrived at a correct answer to a calculation.

Most pupils want to learn and the atmosphere in classrooms is purposeful and focused on learning. Some teachers provide extension activities to stretch pupils and encourage new learning.

Marking is too variable across classes and subjects. In most cases pupils' English and mathematics work is marked to a better standard and helps pupils to improve their work. This analytical marking ensures teachers plan work for future lessons that is appropriately challenging. Topic work is not marked well by teachers and pupils' topic work books are often messy and untidy. Pupils' Arabic work has not been marked.

Reading areas in classrooms are not well kept and not stocked with suitably challenging or well looked after books. Many areas are uninviting and do not encourage a love of reading.

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

Pupils say they feel safe at the academy. They say that most of the time they work well together in lessons and they are keen to learn. Pupils enjoy learning and are interested in their lessons. Strong relationships exist between pupils and staff. However, pupils feel that behaviour is less good when they are not taught by their regular teachers. This is a significant concern, as on the day of the inspection, seven teachers were absent.

Pupils say that bullying is infrequent, although they told Her Majesty's Inspectors that there is some fighting, name calling and swearing. However, they report that incidents of bullying are quickly tackled by adults in the academy. Most staff feel that bullying is managed well.

Improved procedures are now in place to ensure pupils are kept safe although the academy understands they still need to be developed further. The teacher in charge of child protection maintains thorough and meticulous records and has a good understanding of those children considered to be vulnerable. However, this teacher is leaving the academy and there are insufficient plans in place to hand over this responsibility to another member of staff.

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

The principal shows commitment and dedication to the academy and has a desire to see the academy improve. Previously, the academy's weak leadership had resulted in the academy's climate and ethos failing to prepare pupils properly for life in modern Britain or keep them safe. Since the last monitoring visit she has struggled to get the academy back on track. Pupils say that the principal does not visit lessons very often and does not have a visible presence.

The academy is not improving quickly because there is a lack of clarity about what needs to be done. Although there is an improvement plan in place it is not rigorously followed. The plan still lacks any detail about how and when checks on progress will be made. As a result no one is checking on whether the plan is working.

Much of the analysis and monitoring of the academy is carried out by two highly effective assistant principals. They are providing very good support to the principal and are leading on many aspects of the academy's work. However, while they efficiently carry out the day to day aspects of work, there is a lack of vision from the principal to co-ordinate their actions.

The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are not clearly defined. As a result senior leaders cannot always be held to account for the lack of progress in key aspects of the academy's work. The principal, senior leaders and many staff have no performance management targets and the newly appointed associate principal has no job description. There is an understanding that the quality of teaching needs to improve. However, the principal has not monitored the quality of teaching this term and is therefore not getting first-hand experience of engrained weaknesses.

Work has been carried out to improve procedures for the safeguarding of all pupils. Staff have received training, including how to keep pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism, on domestic violence and female genital mutilation. External support has helped to improve safeguarding including an audit of current provision.

Since the inspection in April 2014, some improvements have been made to the curriculum. A topic based approach to learning in history, geography, art and design technology has been introduced. The teaching of religious education and personal, social and health education has been reorganised to ensure that pupils learn about people from a range of faiths. Pupils' books show that they have opportunities to learn about issues such as tolerance, respect, prejudice and how the British legal system works. Assemblies share a wider view of different faiths and religions and pupils told Her Majesty's Inspectors that they are interesting and informative.

Trustees are aware a governing body is not yet in place to oversee the work of the academy. Processes are underway to elect new members and parent elections are

currently taking place. Trustees are heavily involved in ensuring that appointed governors have the right skills to provide appropriate support and challenge.

### **External support**

Most of the trustees are providing valuable support and challenge to the leadership team. As two trustees are head teachers from local outstanding schools they are leading much of this work. However, one trustee has had very little involvement with the academy and is yet to meet some staff and senior leaders. As a result, this increases the pressure and workload for the other three trustees.

The trustees have not shied away from difficult decisions and are currently working with potential sponsors to secure the future of the academy. Trustees have begun to robustly tackle safeguarding concerns to ensure pupils' safety. They know the academy well and are fully aware of the enormity of the job ahead.