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19 January 2015

Eric Jackson  
Principal  
Sandown Bay Academy  
The Fairway  
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Dear Mr Jackson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sandown Bay Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 19 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- ensure that all staff use information about students' achievement consistently well when planning lessons
- set more ambitious targets for disadvantaged students, in order for them to make up lost ground
- evaluate the actions to improve the academy more precisely by their impact on students' achievement and behaviour.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders and the Chair of the management board, who also represents the academy trust. I spoke to a

representative from Hampshire local authority on the telephone. I accompanied you and one of your Vice Principals on visits to observe teaching and learning in English, modern languages, art and mathematics. I evaluated the academy development plan and scrutinised a range of documentation including information about students' current achievement.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in October 2014, three teachers have left the academy. Two teachers have been appointed and two senior leaders from secondary schools on the mainland are supporting leadership in the academy on an interim basis. A number of other changes to leadership roles and responsibilities have been made.

## **Main findings**

You have provided firm, decisive and practical leadership which has strengthened the stability of the academy. It is clear the academy is in secure hands, and your relentless focus on raising standards has boosted staff morale and built up their confidence. You know what needs to be done to improve the academy and you are determined to bring this about. You have made shrewd changes to senior and middle leadership roles, making the most of staff's existing skills, while setting new challenges and insisting on a stronger sense of accountability.

The action plan is focused directly on the areas for improvement. You state candidly that the plan is 'work in progress'. You have accurately identified that some of the milestones marking students' progress are not mapped out ambitiously enough. In response, you have set about amending the planned trajectory of progress to speed up the pace of improvement.

Information about students' progress, is now more streamlined and helpful for teachers' lesson planning. However, not all staff are using the information about students' progress consistently well when setting tasks. In a few cases, expectations of what students can achieve are too low. For example, not enough account has been taken of the need for disadvantaged students to make accelerated progress, not just to keep pace with other students, but to catch up and make up for lost ground.

Academy leaders are rightly focusing on improving the progress of students in Years 8 and 9, particularly in mathematics. You have made sure that students' knowledge and skills are tested accurately and sensible decisions have been made to ensure that students in these year groups benefit from continuity of teaching. The subject leader for mathematics has identified gaps in students' numeracy skills and is wisely making sure they are better prepared for more challenging topics. As a result, there are encouraging signs that students are gaining more confidence in their mathematics skills.

Senior leaders have provided students with more opportunities to demonstrate that they can work harder, including writing at length and completing more challenging tasks. Students are making good use of their 'red books', which contain their key assessment pieces. It is too early to judge the full impact of this strategy, but there are clear signs in some classes that students are taking more pride in their work and are building up their confidence in their own learning and progress. In order to improve students' literacy skills, initiatives have been introduced, such as a proof-reading reminder and a focus on subject-specialist vocabulary. These are common sense approaches. However, senior leaders are not able to point to specific improvements in students' day-to-day achievement as a result of these initiatives.

Leaders track incidents closely in order to identify and tackle any patterns of poor behaviour. In addition, teachers are managing students' behaviour more consistently and effectively. As a result, students' attitudes to learning have improved, which is leading to better academic progress. It is particularly impressive and heartening to hear academy leaders and teachers talking about individual students by name and the difference being made to their well-being and achievement, through effective programmes of support.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The academy benefits from precisely targeted support commissioned by the local authority and the academy trust. The management board share academy leaders' increased ambition and aspirations. Their evaluation of the academy's performance is realistic and detailed. Middle leaders have been following a tailored coaching programme, which has successfully developed their skills when monitoring their subject areas. The local authority has also commissioned practical support from specialist subject advisors in Hampshire local authority. Leadership capacity has been strengthened through the appointment of interim senior leaders from two Hampshire schools. In addition, you have forged strong links with good and improving schools on the Isle of Wight and Hampshire, in order to share effective practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for the Isle of Wight, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce

**Her Majesty's Inspector**