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6 February 2015

Mrs Sandy Todd  
Headteacher  
Southfield Technology College  
Moorclose Road  
Workington, Cumbria  
CA14 5BH

Dear Mrs Todd

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Southfield Technology College**

Following my visit with Rebecca Lawton, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 February 2015, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013. 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection, providing the appointee is able to complete a full year.

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 Interim Executive Board, the Acting Corporate Director of Children's Services for Cumbria and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Raise the quality of teaching in order to accelerate progress and raise standards, particularly for boys, more-able students and all students in English, by:
  - making sure teachers adapt their teaching so that all students are engaged and interested in the work they are given
  - increasing the level of stretch and challenge in lessons so that the more-able students make good or better progress
  - ensuring teachers across all subjects develop students' literacy skills by correcting spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes
  - giving students opportunities to act on the guidance they are given to improve their work and checking up to see they have followed such advice.
- Make sure attendance improves at a faster rate by:
  - exploring effective practice to raise attendance used by other schools
  - enlisting the support of all parents, carers and students more effectively
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by tackling areas of underperformance and also by increasing the proportion of students gaining the top grades in examinations.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - raising expectations by making targets more challenging throughout the school and thereby raising achievement
  - refining the school development plan so that key actions are more precisely focused on areas of underperformance
  - working with external partners to secure the financial stability of the school in the short and medium term
  - undertaking an external review of governance to make sure governors have a realistic view regarding the school's performance and challenge the school more effectively to raise standards.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 4 to 5 February 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher, senior and middle leaders and teachers. They met with groups of students and spoke to others during lessons and break times. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). Inspectors carried out a detailed scrutiny of students' work, randomly selected from each year group.

### **Context**

The opening of the new academy is progressing as planned. Following the closure of Southfield Technology College and Stainburn School and Science College at the end of August 2015, the new academy will open on the Stainburn site. The new building is due to be completed in April 2017.

There have been a few changes to staffing since the last monitoring inspection: there are two temporary staff covering maternity leave; two new teachers have been appointed, one in science and one in mathematics; and a higher level teaching assistant has been appointed to support English teaching.

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

The 2014 benchmarked data show a decline in attainment in English and mathematics to well below national averages. The cohort had very low attainment on entry to the school and also experienced a lot of disruption and poor quality teaching in the past. Consequently, despite the recent improvements to teaching, too many did not make expected progress from their starting points, particularly boys and disadvantaged students.

Students who are currently in school, including those in the sixth form, have made quicker progress in the last year, due to the concerted efforts to improve teaching, by new leaders and existing staff. Leaders have made sure that students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form receive effective specialist teaching to help them make quicker progress and prepare for examinations. Additional small-group or individualised support is helping students to fill gaps in their learning. The Saturday morning sessions for Year 11 students are popular and successful; disadvantaged students are particularly benefiting from these.

Students' progress is also quickening at Key Stage 3, because teachers are assessing their work more accurately and planning activities to build on their knowledge and skills. However, there is still variability in the progress students make in different teaching groups because teaching is not promoting consistently good progress over

time. There are occasions where a few students, particularly boys, are not sufficiently attentive in lessons and are not as productive as they could be in their written work over a number of lessons. Students make the most rapid progress where teachers expect high levels of concentration and set high standards for the quality and quantity of written work.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching continues to improve in the main school and the sixth form. Teachers are developing their skills because they have strong direction from senior leaders, good quality professional development and increased opportunities to share best practice. Lessons are better planned to provide a range of activities and make sure there is enough challenge for the most able students. Assessment is more accurate, enabling teachers to build more systematically on students' existing knowledge and skills. Students say that most lessons are more interesting and help them learn more effectively. However, there are still a few lessons when students are provided with work that does not inspire them or help them learn successfully, like copying from text books, silent reading for long periods or completing worksheets. Students say this is most likely when lessons are taught by teachers covering for absence.

Teachers' marking has improved; it is mostly up to date and adheres to the school's new policy. Students' written work is of better quality than it has been previously overall. However, there are still some books with unfinished, insufficient or poorly presented work. There are times when marking is not specific enough to show students what they need to do to improve their work. Leaders are checking books regularly to make sure that marking is helping students to achieve higher standards. Leaders give appropriate challenge and support to teachers where marking is not good enough.

The development of literacy skills remains a key challenge and a priority across all subjects. Too many students in Key Stage 4 use incorrect grammar and punctuation or make basic spelling mistakes because errors have not been corrected in the past. All teachers are now aware of the importance of correcting errors and that they need to promote literacy skills actively in all subjects. The additional small-group lessons introduced in Year 9 are helping students develop subject specific reading and writing skills. There are appropriate plans to extend these into Year 7 and Year 8. Students with special educational needs have appropriate support in and out of lessons.

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

The majority of students are attentive, cooperative and keen to contribute in lessons. Students are less likely to be removed from lessons and exclusion from school is now rare. Even though there are occasions when a few students are not fully engaged, they do not usually disrupt the learning of other students. Directors of

learning are checking on behaviour and achievement regularly so that appropriate support is put in place where needed. The initiatives focusing on 'responsibility for learning' are helping students to develop their organisational and learning skills. Such initiatives, alongside more effective guidance for choosing courses and careers, are helping to raise students' aspirations and build their confidence.

Students are typically well behaved around school. Those who spoke with inspectors said they all 'know the rules' and have complete confidence in teachers to deal with behaviour that is not acceptable. They mostly have a good understanding of how to keep safe, although there is scope to improve their awareness of risk avoidance.

Attendance and punctuality have improved for all groups of students. The attendance of sixth formers has improved significantly. Students in the sixth form are taking a more active role across the school and are developing their leadership and enterprise skills more effectively.

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

The executive headteacher and IEB are ensuring that the plans for closure of Southfield and Stainburn schools and the opening of the new academy proceed smoothly. They continue to provide strong strategic leadership to make the best use of expertise across both schools. Members of the IEB are fulfilling their roles and supporting the move to the establishment of a new governing body effectively. They are checking on the spending and impact of the pupil premium (additional government money) more rigorously. Procedures to safeguard students and ensure safe recruitment were checked at this monitoring inspection and meet requirements.

The interim headteacher continues to drive through improvements ably and is determined that students at the school achieve as well as they possibly can. She is supported effectively by the deputy headteacher and senior team. All staff are working tirelessly to keep up the pace of change and raise students' achievement. The school has moved a long way since the new leaders took up their posts, less than a year ago. Leaders and all staff are pulling together to improve teaching and raise achievement. Although the results of their efforts cannot yet be seen in the examination performance, teaching continues to improve and achievement is being raised lower down the school. Leaders are doing all they can to ensure equality of opportunity by maintaining the strong focus on the achievement of groups of students. Teachers are working hard and students are more engaged and increasingly confident in their ability to achieve well.

Systems to check on and improve teaching and curriculum-planning are now established and are having a positive impact. The feedback provided following lesson observations gives specific and effective advice to improve the impact of teaching. To date, work scrutiny has been focused on making sure teachers comply with

policies on marking and improving literacy. It now needs to be more evaluative in checking the progress students are making and the quality and range of their work.

The stronger lines of accountability ensure that everyone is aware of the expectations for students' progress. Teachers' performance is managed carefully so that support is put in place where needed and teachers progress in salary only where success is proven. Middle leaders have developed their skills in checking on progress and teaching further, since the last monitoring visit.

### **External support**

The school uses external support well. Leaders have accessed a good range of professional development to improve teaching and enhance leadership. They are working productively in partnership with Stainburn and William Howard Schools to share good practice. The local authority continues to support the school effectively through commissioning support and ensuring stability in leadership through interim and executive headteacher appointments.