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Karl Mackey  
Interim Principal  
University Academy Kidsgrove  
Gloucester Road  
Kidsgrove  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST7 4DL

Dear Mr Mackey

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of University Academy Kidsgrove**

Following my visit to your academy on 20 May 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 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 February 2015.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim principal, representatives of the sponsor and the Chair of the Governing Body, referred to as the Statement of Action Committee (SoAC) at University Academy Kidsgrove. The sponsor and academy's joint statement of action was evaluated along with minutes of recent SoAC meetings.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, the principal has left the academy and the interim principal took up his post in late April. His appointment has been confirmed until the end of the current academic year. The interim principal is currently reviewing the roles and

responsibilities of senior and middle leaders but there have been no other changes in key staff. An external review of governance is underway and an external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium (additional government money for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) will take place in early June. The sponsor and the SoAC are also reviewing the academy's sixth form provision.

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

With support from the Chair of the SoAC and the sponsor, the interim principal has already developed a clear and coherent view about what needs to be done to improve the academy, despite having been in post for only four weeks. This has led to a clear statement of action that spells out what the academy will do over the coming months to secure rapid improvement. The statement of action addresses all of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report, but it would be strengthened by adding additional targets and intermediate milestones to those already contained within it, as this would better enable leaders and others to measure the success of the actions being taken.

The interim principal's openness and vision for the academy have begun to secure the confidence of staff, although the fact that his appointment is only to the end of this academic year is causing some uncertainty and anxiety among them. Securing a longer-term leadership plan for the academy is an urgent priority for the sponsor in order to ensure a stable environment where the necessary changes can be successfully implemented and embedded.

The sponsor, the University of Chester Academies Trust (UCAT), had already taken action to strengthen the academy's governance before the inspection, when it replaced the governing body by the Statement of Action Committee (SoAC) in September 2014. The SoAC is a small group of four people, with significant educational and other expertise and a clear focus on raising standards. It is effectively led by a National Leader of Governance. The SoAC, supplemented by a member of the UCAT board, currently meets every two weeks to review the progress of the statement of action.

The SoAC is well placed to provide support and challenge to the academy's leaders and is itself held to account by the UCAT board, which meets every six weeks. The statement of action does not currently make explicit the different roles that the academy's leaders, the SoAC and the UCAT board will have in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions being taken to improve the academy. It is important that different people or groups carry out actions, monitor their impact and

evaluate their success, and the statement of action would be stronger if the people or groups with these three responsibilities were clearly identified.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**