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Mr Gary Evans
Principal
Halewood Academy
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Merseyside
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Dear Mr Evans

Special measures monitoring inspection of Halewood Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 3 July 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 April 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you the Principal, the vice-Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body and a member of the governing body's executive monitoring board, the executive Principal of the Wade Deacon Multi-Academy Trust, an educational consultant, a representative of the local authority, staff and students. I also scrutinised a range of documentation, including schemes of work and information on students' current attainment and progress. The statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there has been a major restructure of the senior leadership team. In addition, the academy is in the process of joining a local multi-

academy trust, the Wade Deacon Academy Trust. A number of staff have been put on support plans in order to improve their effectiveness. There has been a review of the use of the pupil premium, which is additional government funding intended to support students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority. A sub-group of the governing body, the executive monitoring board, has been set up in order to challenge the academy more robustly and check up on the academy's progress in addressing the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The judgement of special measures, although greeted with some disappointment, did not come as a surprise to senior leaders as they had themselves judged the overall effectiveness of the academy as inadequate. Indeed, such accurate self-evaluation has enabled senior leaders, including governors, to set in motion a number of appropriate and well-focused initiatives that have already enabled the academy to move forward.

The academy's improvement plan is a useful tool in guiding the academy on the journey out of special measures, as it has clear milestones and lines of accountability. In addition, it addresses the correct priorities. However, a little further refinement is required as some success criteria and timescales are too vague. As a result, the improvement plan is not as effective as it might be in helping governors to check that the academy is quickly and successfully addressing identified weaknesses.

As Principal, you have a clear grasp of the strategic direction the academy needs to take and you are ably supported by the incisive vice-Principal; as such, you constitute an effective partnership. However, not all members of the senior leadership team are as capable as you two and this has slowed the academy down in its ability to address urgently the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. You recognised this and, therefore, conducted a major restructure of the senior leadership team. As a result of this restructure, this team is now much better equipped to drive further improvement.

Governors acknowledge that until quite recently they were unsure of the questions to ask in order to hold the academy's leaders more effectively to account. As a result of a review of governance commissioned prior to the previous inspection, governors have had training and have reconstituted the governing body. The executive monitoring board, developed in the wake of the previous inspection, has provided much needed leadership in challenging senior leaders. It has shone an unforgiving

light on all aspects of the academy's work and, as such, has been a substantial impetus in accelerating the speed of change.

In response to the inspection report, the academy commissioned a review by the Wade Deacon Academy Trust into the effectiveness of the use of the pupil premium. The findings of this review will be helpful to the academy in improving the impact of this expenditure in the future. However, this area of the academy's work has been poorly led in the past and, as a result, disadvantaged students continue to underachieve.

The leadership and management of teaching have been weak up until very recently and have failed to improve quickly the overall quality of teaching. Since the inspection, senior leaders have changed the personnel responsible for this area with effect from September 2015 and the procedures to monitor the quality of teaching have become much more robust. In addition, performance management, which had been used ineffectively in the past, has been sharpened considerably. As a result, teachers are now held to account for their performance much more rigorously than was previously the case.

Students that I spoke to during my visit mentioned that 'lessons have got harder' since the inspection and they were also aware that teachers now expect much higher standards of presentation in their work. When I examined students' books, I found the work to be neatly executed: this demonstrates that students have, in the main, responded favourably to teachers' higher expectations in this regard.

According to the information provided by the academy during this monitoring inspection, there have been some improvements to students' achievement, for example, predictions for the forthcoming GCSE examinations represent an improvement on the previous year's results. However, rates of progress in both English and mathematics, although improving, remain substantially below those found nationally in both Key Stages 3 and 4.

The academy has benefited from a productive partnership with the Wade Deacon Academy Trust, for example, through the review of the use of the pupil premium. The academy also engages well with the local authority which has provided financial help and has brokered support in improving teaching from an educational consultant.

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 strongly recommend that the academy should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant
Her Majesty's Inspector