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24 September 2015

Mrs K Godsall  
Principal  
New Forest Academy  
Long Lane  
Southampton  
SO45 2PA

Dear Mrs Godsall

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of the New Forest Academy**

Following my visit with Theresa Phillips, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 22 and 23 September 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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 academy is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management board, the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire, the Education Funding Agency, and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education. They will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better by consistently checking that all teachers:
  - set and mark homework regularly, give students clear advice about how they can improve their work and plan time for them to absorb and respond to the comments they receive
  - explore the meaning of subject-specific and general words in all subjects and extend students' vocabulary and writing skills
  - provide work which matches students' different abilities, including in classes which are setted
  - observe and learn from the high-quality teaching that exists in the academy.
  
- Increase progress to raise standards by ensuring that:
  - the percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, matches the national average in 2014
  - all students, particularly the most able, aim for and attain higher GCSE grades and the percentage of A\*/A grades rises
  - the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is narrowed to at least that seen nationally
  - students supported by the pupil premium make the same good progress they have made in Key Stage 3 when they move into Key Stage 4
  - progress is more rapid in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, particularly for students with special educational needs
  - steps are taken to address underachievement in subjects which performed significantly below the national average in 2013.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that senior leaders:
  - are realistic about the academy's performance and energetically seek to improve it
  - confirm standards and levels of progress by supporting and analysing middle leaders' work and using external support to check that their predictions for students' progress are correct
  - act swiftly when underachievement is identified
  - extend the content of professional development for middle leaders and teachers
  - sharpen their assessment of the quality of teaching and learning
  - work more effectively with staff to eliminate any unacceptable student behaviour.
  
- Meet all statutory requirements for safeguarding by senior leaders and governors by:
  - checking regularly that the single central register is complete and up to date

- reviewing the child protection policy annually
- improving the quality of training on safeguarding and child protection and ensuring that all staff receive it
- sharpening the analysis and records on behaviour, bullying and racist incidents, children on the child protection register, children of concern and children whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 September 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised evaluation and planning documents, and met with the Principal, the executive principal, other senior staff and middle leaders, representatives of the management board, the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) mathematics consultant and groups of students. Telephone conversations took place with the chair of the management board and the regional director of AET. Seventeen lessons were observed, eight of them jointly with senior staff. The 67 responses to Parent View were analysed.

### **Context**

The academy has ceased recruiting to its sixth form and there are now no students in Years 12 and 13.

### **Outcomes for students**

Examination results for students in summer 2015 showed some improvements over previous years, with higher proportions of students achieving good grades in the three separate sciences, and better results in core and additional science than has been the case recently. The proportion of students obtaining at least a grade C in English literature rose significantly, but targets for English language were not met and outcomes were not as good as in 2014. Students' results in mathematics were disappointing, with around only two in five students making the progress expected of them over their time at the academy. Senior staff are very aware of the urgent need to make improvements to students' progress in mathematics. The new head of department has considerable experience and a previously good track record of supporting examination success in a local school. He is leading a substantially new team which, although relatively inexperienced, is focused on driving improvement and is being well supported at this crucial time. As a result, there is already better teaching and more secure learning in mathematics so far this term. Boys achieved less well than girls overall this summer, and the gap between the achievements of disadvantaged students and others remained large. The few students in the sixth form taking examinations in 2015 achieved their target grades.

There are clear signs of improving trends in achievement for current students and indications that the academy's focus on meeting the learning needs of different groups of students is beginning to make a real difference. Students' reawakened commitment to learning and their sense of ambition, together with the general feeling that the academy is now demanding and supporting higher levels of achievement, are generating positive attitudes to learning across the academy. A

very high proportion of parents who responded to Parent View are happy with the way their child is taught and the progress they are now making.

The particular learning needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are identified accurately and quickly. There is good communication of these needs to teachers, appropriate training has taken place and there are now systems in place to check the progress of this group of students. The outcomes of this monitoring are not always analysed closely enough to drive further improvements. Monitoring focuses on the implementation of strategies to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs but sometimes fails to detect broader issues, such as when work set for these and other students is not matched well enough to their particular needs and their starting points. This means that students with additional needs still do not always make reliably rapid and secure progress.

Bringing about improvements in students' literacy skills continues to be a high priority. Systems are now in place to ensure that there is an academy-wide response to driving up students' reading, writing and speaking skills to complement the effective work in English. Expectations of students' vocabulary, both general and subject-specific, and the quality of their verbal and written expression are not yet high enough in all subjects to support rapid improvements.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching continues to improve, and assessment is now accurate and reliable in nearly all subjects. This is due to well-targeted training, effective support for the development of a range of teaching skills, and a clear and consistent message from senior and middle leaders about high standards being required now in all classrooms. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. Where specific training to support students' achievements at the highest grades is required, it is provided quickly and effectively. The academy's high expectations are expressed in appropriately demanding targets for students; progress towards them is monitored frequently and analysed on an individual and group basis. These high expectations are not always evident in classrooms; students' work that is not quite up to standard is sometimes accepted or even praised.

The best teaching is beginning to unleash students' real potential. When this happens, there is a sense of excitement about learning and students show that they can rise to the demands made of them. For example, in one Year 11 English lesson observed, students relished the opportunity to explore the complex relationships between the characters in *Much Ado about Nothing*. The vast majority of teaching can now support students' learning, but too often falls short of inspiring and generating inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity. This is mainly because not enough teachers are capitalising on students' better behaviour and their greater willingness to be challenged and stretched. Too little of the teaching involves

adapting work to reflect the needs of students of different abilities; too often teachers fail to tailor work to meet the needs of the most able and those who may struggle for some reason.

Interestingly, students are now being involved in stimulating debate with teachers about new strategies and ways of supporting more challenge and more fun in learning. The first round of such work concentrated on developing good questioning strategies. This development has the capacity to be very influential and many students are impressed that some of their friends are working with staff in this way. They rightly see it as a real sign that the academy is keen to improve the quality of teaching. The impact of this work in lessons is already evident to students and to inspectors.

Homework is becoming a more regular feature of learning. It is being set and marked more frequently, according to the academy's policy. Teachers' marking of students' work is also more reliable and much is useful in supporting learning. However, the good advice for improvement offered as a part of this process is not always acted on by students or followed up by teachers.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Students' behaviour continues to improve. The positive 'can do' spirit, which was nurtured and developed last year by the academy's leadership, is now becoming embedded. The overall very positive view expressed by parents about the academy's management of behaviour on Parent View is well founded.

Students are willing and ready to learn. Sometimes the impact of previously poor teaching and learning is still evident. For example, many students still need a lot of support and encouragement to express their ideas in lessons. In one science lesson, students struggled in conversations with inspectors to frame and present their understanding of the factors which influence the rates of chemical reactions.

Students conduct themselves around the site in a pleasant and cheerful manner. There is a spirit of friendliness and cooperation. Students say that they feel safe in the academy, and that instances of bullying are rare and are tackled by staff promptly and effectively. Instances of disruption in lessons are becoming less frequent, but a few students still challenge the authority of staff and can behave rudely sometimes, slowing the learning of others. The systems in place to prevent such behaviour spoiling lessons, and other students' enjoyment of school life, generally operate well and are making a difference.

Attendance has improved and is now near the national average as a result of better systems to monitor and respond to absence. However, too many disadvantaged students are persistent absentees. Trends in exclusions remain positive but proportionately many more disadvantaged students are excluded than others. The

Learning Pathways facility provides effective support for students who need extra attention and guidance at certain times.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The Principal continues to provide steady and firm leadership for the academy. She and senior staff give a strong and consistent message that the academy is improving and becoming a happier and more successful place to learn, but that more is expected and that standards must continue to improve rapidly. The management board continues to offer her and other leaders appropriately high levels of challenge, and they support her in achieving her ambitions for the academy.

Senior leaders' judgements about the quality of specific teaching, learning and assessment are mostly accurate, but there is a tendency to be slightly generous about overall judgements. Messages to staff about standards do not always draw a clear enough distinction between what constitutes good teaching and learning and what requires improvement. As a result, some aspects of the academy's self-evaluation are slightly optimistic; they reflect the urge to celebrate improvements more than they signal the distance yet to travel. Adjustments to the development planning currently underway have the capacity to address this and to bring more thoroughness and rigour to the way that leaders and managers signal the need for improvement.

Middle leaders are now becoming more confident about steering improvements in their subject areas. This is because they are now much better focused on the quality of students' learning. There are regular opportunities for them and senior staff to meet and to discuss priorities, and to review progress against targets. These meetings are used well.

All statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are now met fully. There is a strong culture in the academy of promoting high standards of safeguarding practice on a day-by-day basis, driven by a comprehensive training programme for all staff and effective policies and procedures. The very close attention given to maintaining high-quality systems and processes, and the healthy culture of safeguarding in the school, ensure that students, including those who may be vulnerable, are kept safe.

Some older students feel that the way in which the academy prepares them for life beyond school is not yet as good as they would wish. The academy is currently reviewing its provision for careers advice and guidance, and the ways in which important teaching on diversity and equalities issues, together with other life skills such as personal financial management, are delivered through the assembly and tutor programmes.

The management board continues to exercise an appropriately close and assertive influence over the work of the academy. Members remain very ambitious for the



academy and are well informed about its work. The board will not flinch from challenging senior staff and discussions about standards are often practical, realistic and useful. Actions flow from meetings and contribute directly to the improvements evident around the school.

### **External support**

The sponsors, AET, continue to provide very good support for the work of the academy. Representatives work well with the management board in offering challenge and stimulus to senior leaders. There is a strong, healthy and productive working relationship between AET, the management board and the academy staff.

The executive principal continues to maintain close contact with the academy and offers day-to-day support for the senior team, but he is gradually handing over more responsibility for strategic issues and their implementation to academy leaders. The Director of Challenge and Intervention from AET exercises close oversight of the work of the academy. She led the influential review of teaching and learning last term which pointed the way to further developments and necessary changes to monitoring and evaluation strategies. The sponsors have assisted with the recruitment of the new head of the mathematics department from The Romsey School, where close links remain. AET consultants continue to give good support to the work of several subject areas, especially mathematics, and also the special needs department and in English. Plans are in place to offer considerable further support to the new mathematics team this term.

The sponsors also provided high-quality personnel advice on the staff restructuring that took place last term. They have supported the building developments which are rapidly improving the quality of so many areas around the site, including the new hall and the dining room.

Ringwood School, a local national teaching academy, offers useful support funded by a Department for Education school-to-school support grant. This involves training and strategic support for the management of teaching, learning and assessment, and is being broadened to involve support for mathematics this term.