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Mr Ammar Al-Ghabban  
Acting Headteacher  
Newlands Academy  
Stuart Road  
Peckham Rye  
London  
SE15 3AZ

Dear Mr Al-Ghabban

### **Short inspection of Newlands Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 2016 with David Scott, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection of your predecessor school, there have been a number of significant changes. The school gained academy status and has been sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). The school has been relocated to a new building with improved resources and lots of space. Two headteachers have left their posts, resulting in a period of significant staff turbulence. As the deputy headteacher and as acting headteacher from January 2016, you have worked hard to gain the trust and respect of staff, pupils and parents. As a result of your strong leadership, the school is now fully staffed and no new appointments have been necessary for some time. Everyone is now working together to create a therapeutic community that provides a highly valued service for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Pupils respond quickly to the well-structured support systems that are in place and the high expectations that staff have of them. Classrooms and outdoor areas are maintained to a high standard and pupils play their part in keeping them this way. They appreciate the attractive and well-resourced surroundings that have been created and there is very little graffiti or litter to be seen. When damage is caused, it is quickly repaired, often by the pupil responsible for the damage. Pupils value the support given to them and can recognise how this helps them. They understand how behaviour is managed and what rewards and consequences are likely because

all staff apply the behaviour policy in a consistent manner. This has led to a rapid reduction in the number of temporary exclusions this term.

Pupils become more confident about their learning because teachers are skilled in using creative and engaging teaching and learning strategies. For example, drama and media resources are used effectively to explain difficult concepts in science and help them make sense. Teachers are held to account for closing any gaps in understanding so that pupils can catch up with their peers of the same age as quickly as possible. They set challenging targets that take account of individual learning, social and emotional needs. Most pupils present their work with care and respond well to the helpful feedback given by teachers. Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced in all subjects, and teachers plan lessons to allow pupils to constantly apply and improve these skills. Support staff are used effectively to promote learning and ensure that pupils stay focused on their work. As a result, any disruptions are dealt with quickly and no time is wasted.

The school offers pupils a broad and balanced curriculum, tailored to reflect their different interests and aspirations for the future. School leaders monitor the attainment of all pupils carefully to ensure that there are no differences in the performance of minority or disadvantaged groups compared with that of other pupils. They check how well all pupils are performing compared with their peers with the same starting points in mainstream schools. This ensures that the most-able pupils are challenged to achieve as well as they can and start to catch up quickly. Teachers check that assessments are accurate by working with colleagues in other schools, including those within the AET partnership. As a result, more Year 11 pupils are successfully completing GCSE courses and the pass rate for all subjects, including English and mathematics, has improved significantly over the last two years. When leaders recognised that pupils did not achieve as highly in GCSE mathematics as they did in GCSE English last year, they put in place further interventions. Consequently, outcomes for this subject are now improving, particularly at key stage 3. Many pupils also make at least good progress towards their social and emotional targets, which are monitored and reviewed regularly. Work in books demonstrates that most boys are making strong progress towards challenging targets and attaining well. Although systems for evaluating attainment are in place, it is unclear how much progress pupils are making from their starting points when they join the school. This means leaders and those responsible for governance are unable to monitor and evaluate progress as effectively as they could.

You are aware that overall attendance rates for pupils at the school are still well below those of other schools and remain an important area for improvement. Systems for monitoring and following up absence, including for those pupils who are persistently absent, are robust and persistent. Successful interventions have led to some individuals attending more frequently, and a significant number of pupils attend very well. However, absence is not always recorded in the registers using the correct codes and leaders are not establishing how well pupils have attended before they join the school. This means that you are unable to judge whether pupils are making significant improvements in their attendance from their different starting points.

The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and you are planning for further improvements to make full use of the impressive facilities that are available. You are well supported in this by AET leaders. However, systems to allow the sponsor and those responsible for governance to hold leaders strongly to account are not yet fully established. For example, the school development plan does not specify who will check the progress being made, or include any milestones to allow them to assess whether improvements are happening quickly enough.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school is a safe and supportive place. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All the required staff employment checks have been carried out and safeguarding systems are managed efficiently. Careful checks are made every morning to ensure that no harmful substances or potential weapons are brought onto the site. Mobile telephones are not permitted to be used by either pupils or staff during the day. The site is a safe and secure environment because pupils move around the building appropriately. Detailed risk assessments are carried out to ensure that pupils are kept safe during off-site visits and trips. Individual risk assessments and behaviour plans ensure that pupils with challenging behaviours are supported well and that any potential risk to others is minimised. All behaviour incidents are logged and carefully monitored so that additional support can be provided. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and reflect the practice seen. Incidents of physical restraint have reduced rapidly this year. Child protection roles and responsibilities are known and understood by everyone. All staff receive regular training to ensure that they refresh their understanding of how best to keep pupils safe. This has included recent training on how to minimise the risks of extremism and ensuring that pupils know how to stay safe online. All staff meet daily to share information and address any new concerns. Key workers make regular contact with parents and carers, and work closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils get all the support they need.

### **Inspection findings**

- Current leaders are well respected by staff and pupils for their effective leadership and support. They are credited with making rapid and effective improvements that have ensured that the school is back on track and provides high-quality support to pupils within the borough and beyond. Leaders are working closely with the local authority to increase the number of pupils referred to the school for placements and are exploring how they can support those with autistic spectrum disorders.
- All staff model the attitudes and behaviours they wish to see adopted by others. They are highly effective in defusing potentially confrontational situations and helping pupils to accept responsibility for their own actions.
- Teaching and learning standards have been improved as a result of effective training opportunities provided to staff. These are recognised as being of high quality and planned carefully to support any development needs.

- The school day is carefully planned to ensure that pupils are given time to eat healthy food, enjoy physical activities and receive appropriate mentoring and coaching from staff and other professionals.
- Learning time is used well to improve literacy and numeracy skills, together with the social and emotional aspects of learning. Pupils benefit from a wide range of subjects, including enrichment activities to develop their interests and skills in preparation for when they leave the school. As a result, most pupils improve their attitudes towards learning and start to make quicker progress.
- School staff work very effectively with other professionals and therapists to ensure that pupils are well supported and can engage with learning activities successfully.
- Governance arrangements have been reviewed and a smaller monitoring board is now in place. This includes representatives from the AET, independent teaching and learning professionals, and headteachers of similar schools. They have helped you to evaluate teaching and learning and check that your findings are accurate.
- The AET leader responsible for special educational needs chairs the management board and has helped you to maintain standards during a time of significant change and disruption to leadership and management at the school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- attendance registers include the correct codes and that pupils start to make rapid improvements on their previous attendance when they join the school
- assessment information systems allow leaders to evaluate how much progress all pupils are making from their individual starting points more clearly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management board, the chief executive officer of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the London borough of Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, meetings were held with members of the leadership team, a group of teachers and a group of support staff. I met with an executive officer of the AET, who also acts as the chair of the school's management board. Inspectors spoke to therapists and staff responsible for monitoring safeguarding, special educational needs and attendance. A parent was spoken to during the inspection. Inspectors were joined by leaders to make a number of short visits to all classes and look at examples of pupils' work. The 15 responses to the staff questionnaire were considered. Pupils were spoken to throughout the inspection, including during lessons and over breaktime. A range of documentation was reviewed which related to safeguarding and the work of the school.