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31 March 2016

Elizabeth Furber  
Acting Principal  
All Saints Academy  
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Dear Mrs Furber

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of All Saints Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 8 March, 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 that have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in July 2015. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of Governors, the Director of Education for the Diocese of St Albans, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Spencer

**Associate Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2015.**

- Raise achievement for all students in the academy by:
  - providing more ambitious and challenging work for students
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information well to design activities which build on the prior knowledge, skills and understanding of their students
  - making sure that feedback clearly guides students on how to revise their work, and that teachers build in opportunities in lessons for this to take place
  - further developing the current work to share the best practice in teaching across the academy.
  
- Ensure that all staff apply the academy's policies on behaviour with consistency.
  
- Improve the leadership and management of the academy by:
  - holding teachers and leaders to account for the performance of their students with greater rigour
  - tracking the progress of different groups of students more accurately, in order to deal with underperformance effectively.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the acting principal, members of the senior leadership team, a group of pupils representing all year groups, the Chair of Governors and a representative from both of the co-sponsors. The inspector visited a range of lessons across different subject areas and year groups to observe the progress being made, and to review pupils' books and folders. In addition, the inspector reviewed a range of documentation and information including the academy's improvement plan, the most recent pupil achievement information, attendance and behaviour records, evaluations of the quality of teaching, and the minutes of governors' meetings.

### **Context**

Since the first monitoring visit in December 2015, several members of the teaching staff have resigned and some important appointments, such as a new head of sixth form, have been made to begin either after Easter or in September 2016. Changes have been made to the timetable and to class groups to limit the impact of these departures on pupils, but this has required senior leaders to take on more teaching themselves than would usually be the case. Leaders are confident that they have adequate staff in place for September.

The governing body are in the early stages of consultation to appoint a new sponsor for the academy. The current sponsors, the Diocese of St Albans and the University of Bedfordshire, are working closely and cooperatively to support this process.

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

The acting principal and her leadership team only began their work in November 2015, and so have had a relatively short period of time in which to address the many weaknesses identified at the previous inspection in July 2015. At the time of the first monitoring visit in December 2015, leaders had quickly devised an appropriate plan and taken a number of promising steps to rapidly improve the academy. They have taken many difficult decisions and challenged staff robustly to improve the quality of teaching. Most staff have responded well to the changes introduced and inadequate teaching is less common as a result. Bold steps have also been taken to sharpen procedures to manage behaviour and improve attendance. Teachers have improved systems for dealing with poor behaviour and pupils are responding well to clearer discipline and consequences. As a result, attendance has improved and the use of fixed-term exclusion is in decline.

Members of staff with leadership responsibilities are increasingly effective in taking responsibility for the areas they lead. Performance management targets have been sharpened to ensure that good pupil outcomes are a key expectation. Heads of department are central to this process, and are regularly reviewing the quality of

teaching and assessment in their areas alongside senior leaders. Many leaders are drawing on external support and advice to help them shape improvements to the curriculum and ensure that assessment is accurate. Additional support is targeted at pupils according to need, for example learning mentors and teaching assistants work alongside disadvantaged pupils or pupils with special educational needs or disability. On Friday afternoons, Year 11 pupils now attend additional lessons or receive help with coursework, although this has mostly focused on support in English and mathematics so far.

However, recent assessments and predictions for the summer examinations indicate that although outcomes overall are likely to be an improvement on 2015, significant weaknesses in pupils' achievement persist in key areas. The quality of teaching, assessment and pupils' attitudes to learning have not improved rapidly enough in many areas. The progress made by some groups of pupils, and in some key subjects, is low and outcomes are likely to remain well below average in the summer. In the sixth form, gaps in teaching and a slower pace of action to secure improvement have meant that learners lack confidence in some aspects of their provision and are not making the progress they should in some subjects.

The Chair of Governors has been tireless in his support of the academy through a very difficult period. He is knowledgeable about the improvements being made, as well as the areas of weakness that persist. He visits the academy regularly to meet with parents, support leaders, and monitor the improvements being made. The information that leaders provide for governors is detailed and gives them a clear overview of progress towards the implementation of the academy improvement plan. However, governors have still not identified clear, measurable targets in the improvement plan to measure the improvements that are being made, and are not sufficiently challenging leaders about the progress being made by pupils.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement**

- The acting principal and her leadership team have brought stability, clarity of vision and energetic leadership to the academy. In many areas, they have acted swiftly to raise standards in a short period of time.
- Communication and engagement with parents has improved. A higher proportion of parents are attending parents' evening. Steps have been taken to improve the clarity of homework expectations, and the school website and newsletters have been significantly improved.
- Significant improvements have been secured to attendance and to pupils' behaviour and welfare. Although low-level disruption persists in too many lessons, systems for monitoring and addressing poor behaviour and bullying are robust and pupils have confidence in them.

- Teaching and assessment are improving and are very effective in areas such as art, physical education and technology. New and innovative approaches to planning are leading to lessons that are more closely matched to pupils' needs. Assessment is regular and closely monitored; increasingly it is having an impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement**

- Pupils are not making rapid enough progress in key subjects such as science, history and mathematics, and overall progress is very uneven across year groups. Significant gaps remain between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and others.
- Governors are not using the academy improvement plan to hold leaders to account. They do not have a clear understanding of whether the pace or impact of improvements is sufficient.
- In the sixth form, current predictions indicate that outcomes for learners following vocational study programmes may worsen in 2016. Sixth formers feel that they lack sufficient guidance as they prepare for exams, or sufficient support in making applications for higher education, employment or training.

### **External support**

The academy has drawn on helpful support from the Chiltern Learning Trust, which has worked with curriculum leaders to help them evaluate the quality of teaching and identify areas for improvement. The trust has also provided support and advice in English and mathematics that is helping to ensure that assessments are well focused and accurate.