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4 December 2017

Mr Karl Mackey  
Principal  
The Albion Academy  
1 London Street  
Salford  
Greater Manchester  
M6 6QT

Dear Mr Mackey

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Albion Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 17 November 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection in June 2014, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and the academy trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Salford Academy Trust and the trust's director of education. During these meetings, I discussed the actions taken since the last inspection and their impact. I considered and evaluated a wide range of documentary evidence, including the school's action plans. We made several walks to observe pupils learning and in their breaktime. I observed pupils arriving at the school at the start of the day.

## **Context**

Recently, there have been considerable changes to staffing. Since you took over as principal, one vice-principal has left. The subject leaders of English, mathematics and science have left. In addition, 16 other teachers or teaching assistants have left. Seventeen staff have joined the school, including 10 teachers. A vice-principal who was working at a different school within the trust has returned to her post in this school.

## **Main findings**

The period of time directly following the last inspection saw the quality of education decline. Pupils currently in Year 11 describe behaviour around the school and in classrooms during that period as inadequate. The achievement of pupils leaving the school in 2016 was inadequate. Standards continued to decline. The achievement of Year 11 pupils who sat their GCSEs in June 2017 was even weaker.

Improvement started with the appointment of a new CEO to the trust in January 2017. He made critical structural changes to how the school was run and helped governance improve. You took up your appointment as principal in the middle of June 2017. In the very short period of time from then to this visit, you have completely transformed the school. Now pupils say that they feel safe, behaviour has improved considerably and they are now able to learn. The extent of improvement to these aspects and to the quality of school leadership and management has been so considerable that, already, the school's reputation within the local community has risen. Applications for places made by parents on behalf of their children currently in Year 6 are significantly higher than they have ever been. Reasonable projections suggest that, for the first time, Year 7 will be close to being full in September 2018.

You have implemented an excellent strategy to kick-start improvement by rapidly creating a culture where school leaders, teachers and pupils have raised their expectations of what they think they deserve and can achieve. Staff who have been at the school for some time believe that you have inspired them to improve. You have achieved this by providing considerable support, guidance and encouragement. Leaders and teachers say that they are now much more accountable for the quality of their work but welcome this because they know they are becoming much better at what they do and they are part of a rapidly improving school. School leaders and managers are beginning to adopt your principles and strive to attain your very high aspirations for what the school can provide for its pupils.

You quickly started to improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school. Rates of attendance were poor and published information disguised huge proportions of pupils turning up late at the start of the day and absenting themselves from individual lessons. Although now no better than average, pupils' attendance has

seen a considerable improvement. Very few pupils are now late and, during lessons, all pupils are in classes. This has been achieved through setting very clear expectations and, to a lesser extent, by improving the quality of teaching. Pupils are in no doubt that they value what the school is now offering them and that they, in turn, feel valued themselves. I spoke to several pupils who told me that their behaviour last year was unacceptable. This year, however, they have radically changed their opinion of the school and now behave very well, simply because they feel that they have a chance to do well. Universally, pupils appreciate the improved behaviour and say that, as a result, their learning has improved considerably.

You are realistic about the extent your reforms have had on the quality of education. You recognise that you have only begun to improve the quality of teaching and so pupils' achievement will take some time to become good.

It is evident that improvements to the school are only beginning to gather momentum. The school's leadership team has demonstrated its capacity to improve. Leaders also show a great desire to maintain this momentum of improvement inspired by you. A good start has been made on addressing the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report.

The governors have undertaken a review of their work. They are now in a better position to both support you and provide you with appropriate challenge. Your strategies and plans for improvement are effective and you can point to rapid improvement in some areas.

### **External support**

The trust, under the direction of the new CEO, has made a considerable contribution to improving the school. It has clarified lines of accountability throughout the trust, governance and the school. It has demonstrated that it will hold people strictly to account for their responsibilities, focusing particularly closely on outcomes for pupils. Both you and the trust have engaged people with a range of expertise to support the school. So far, the quality of this external support has been very strong and has made a major contribution to the school's improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the Salford Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**