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25 June 2018

Mr Barry Bridden  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Bridden

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Rose Bridge Academy**

Following my visit with David Hampson, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 12 to 13 June 2018, 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2018.

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 special measures

the trust's statement of action is not fit for purpose

the academy's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that The Dean Trust (TDT) may appoint up to four newly qualified teachers to be deployed to teach mathematics, modern foreign languages or science at Rose Bridge Academy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim academy management committee, the chair of the board of the Community First Academy Trust (CFAT), the chief executive officers of CFAT and TDT, the regional schools commissioner

and the director of children's services for Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2018**

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - developing governance so that governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold leaders to account for the quality of education provided
  - improving the way that pupil premium funding is deployed and its impact evaluated so that disadvantaged pupils make faster progress
  - improving the accuracy and rigour of self-assessment and development planning so that leaders respond more effectively to address areas in need of improvement
  - ensuring that all teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils are making
  - embedding the school's new systems for tracking pupils' progress so that pupils, teachers and leaders have a clear understanding of how much progress pupils are making
  - widening the range of extra-curricular opportunities so that more pupils can benefit from these activities
  - making better use of the pockets of strong teaching practice that do exist to raise the overall quality of teaching across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and so rapidly improve pupils' outcomes by:
  - ensuring that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan activities which meet pupils' different needs and engage their interest
  - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils with different starting points and backgrounds can achieve
  - teaching and developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills more effectively across all areas of the curriculum.
- Develop pupils' behaviour by:
  - ensuring that pupils adopt consistently positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work
  - tackling persistent lateness more effectively so that pupils are punctual to school.

It is strongly recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this

specific aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 to 13 June 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders and a group of other staff. Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and had informal conversations with others in class and at other times during the school's day. Meetings were held with representatives of CFAT and with representatives of TDT. An inspector met with the chair of the interim academy management committee. Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school for pupils in Years 7 to 10. The documents examined by inspectors included CFAT's statement of intent and the academy improvement plan.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, CFAT initially commissioned a local, effective secondary school, and more recently TDT, to provide expertise in working with secondary schools and school improvement support.

The headteacher and a deputy headteacher who were in post at the time of the inspection left the school soon after its conclusion and CFAT appointed an interim principal. Very recently, a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers have been appointed. These new senior leaders are all from TDT. At the same time as the most recent senior leader appointments, the interim principal left the school. A number of other members of staff have also left the school and many of the vacancies created have not been filled.

CFAT is liaising with the office of the regional schools commissioner about the future sponsorship and governance arrangements for the academy.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The very recent changes to senior leadership in the school have given new purpose to the school's work and started to rebuild the confidence of staff and pupils. Staff morale has risen. Leaders have raised expectations of teachers and pupils. Teachers are using the existing school policies more consistently. As a result, there have been marked improvements to pupils' behaviour and readiness to learn. Most pupils recognise the benefits that this stability brings. However, leaders and other members of staff recognise that these changes are at an early stage and need to be fully embedded. Teachers are working hard to implement the high expectations about following school routines. While some pupils have shown a negative response to this firmer approach, this response is reducing as pupils understand how the changes will help them to learn.

The very recent changes to the school's leadership means that the previous

planning in CFAT's statement of intent, which forms the trust's statement of action, and the academy's improvement plan have been, in large part, superseded. However, the exiting plans lack sharpness. For example, these do not identify the intended impact of actions precisely enough. Some of the targets included are not sufficiently demanding, including an indication that reducing attendance may be acceptable. Data included gives a potential benchmark of unacceptably poor achievement. In addition, there is insufficient focus on improving very rapidly the outcomes for pupils now at the end of Year 11.

Despite the very recent improvements to the school and some areas of steady improvement over the period since the inspection, the school has not made sufficient progress over this time. Despite the concerns raised at the inspection about pupils' slow progress and low attainment, the school's own data indicates that Year 11 pupils' GCSE performance this year is likely to be as poor as in recent years.

The statement of action was not previously submitted to Ofsted, as required, soon after the inspection. CFAT representatives said that this was because the letter requesting submission of the plan was not passed on from the school. However, this indicates a concerning breakdown in the systems for transferring information from the school to the trust.

The review of governance recommended in the inspection report was completed as rapidly as possible after the inspection. CFAT requested that this review should consider the trust's overall governance systems rather than focusing solely on Rose Bridge Academy. The review identified that CFAT did not act swiftly or decisively enough to tackle the problems at the school and ensure rapid improvement. CFAT members were, and remain, honest and open about the difficulties they faced, in particular, in providing effective support and challenge to a secondary school in difficulties. For this reason, CFAT immediately took steps to bring in external support to the school from a local, effective secondary school. In addition, they ensured that there were no gaps in providing senior leadership for the school.

CFAT has established an interim academy management committee, formed of a small group of people with experience of governance in schools which require rapid improvement. While these people have been appointed to their roles, the committee has not yet met.

The review of the school's use of the pupil premium was also completed soon after the inspection. This review clearly identified the key issues that the school needs to address in order to ensure that the pupil premium has most impact on the success of disadvantaged pupils. A programme of action has been planned from the start of the next school year. However, little action has been taken in the meantime. A follow-up review was scheduled to take place just before this inspection. That further review has not yet been completed.

Over the period since the inspection, leaders have taken steps to improve teaching.

They commissioned a review of teaching and learning from an effective secondary school. In response, individual training was introduced for some teachers with the aim of helping them to improve particular skills or other aspects of their work. This started to make teaching more effective. Since the arrival of the team from TDT, leaders have introduced a weekly programme of training for staff. This has already led to greater consistency in teachers' approaches across the school.

The previous inspection identified that there were too few opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities. Staff have provided a range of sporting and other activities for pupils. This programme is currently somewhat reduced because of the GCSE examinations currently taking place for pupils in Year 11. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy taking part.

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

The quality of teaching remains highly inconsistent. Where teachers capture pupils' interest, pupils learn well, sometimes bursting with enthusiasm to answer questions in class. At other times, teaching is uninspiring, pupils are very reluctant to learn and behave poorly.

Teachers told inspectors that teaching has improved over the last few weeks because they have been given the tools to manage pupils' behaviour in class, which allows them to teach. Teachers are consistently identifying parts of lessons that are 'teacher time', when the teacher is talking to the class; 'team time', when pupils are working together and 'task time', when pupils are working individually. The clarity of what pupils are expected to be doing during these activities means that learning progresses more quickly than in the past. Where teachers' relationships with pupils are positive, it is easier for teachers to ensure that pupils are doing as expected. However, leaders and teachers are supporting other teachers when this is needed to ensure that the new approaches work.

Leaders and teachers have continued the development of the assessment system put in place shortly before the previous inspection. Teachers set pupils individual targets in each of their subjects. Pupils know about these targets. The assessment system used in the school closely matches that used by TDT. This means that changes to this system linked to the new approaches to teaching and learning will be small.

Year 7 and 8 pupils start each English lesson by reading for 10 minutes as part of a programme using books matched to pupils' ability to develop their reading further. In the period up to the inspection, despite this programme, the average reading age of pupils in Year 7 fell compared to their actual age and for Year 8 remained the same. After the inspection, staff reviewed how this programme worked and introduced additional monitoring and teaching to help weaker readers. Since the inspection, pupils' reading ages overall have increased faster than their actual ages. Teachers have put less emphasis on developing pupils' broader mathematical skills,

even though this was an area of weakness identified in the inspection report.

Classrooms are tidy and are attractive places for learning.

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

Most pupils have responded very well to the school's recent higher expectations, but a small number have found it harder to comply. Leaders have been careful to explain why higher standards of behaviour are needed. This has helped pupils to understand why the changes have been made. The higher expectations include about how pupils wear their uniform. Pupils look smart and wear their uniform well. In addition, pupils are now expected to be better equipped for school. For example, each pupil is now expected to bring a school bag.

The school's own information and inspection observations indicate that pupils' attitudes towards their learning and behaviour are generally less strong for lower sets. However, there are examples of different groups of pupils in all years behaving very well. While pupils are polite and friendly towards visitors, inspectors witnessed some bad language during physical education and when Year 11 pupils were leaving an examination.

Pupils' attendance remains around the national average. However, over this school year, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has declined compared to that of other pupils. Over the same period, lateness has reduced. This is because more attention is being paid to this issue and sanctions for poor punctuality are being applied more rigorously. However, the number of pupils who are late exceeds the targets for punctuality set by the school.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Senior leaders hold detailed information about pupils' achievement collected from the regular assessment of pupils. However, this information is not shared widely enough with subject leaders and teachers. In the past, middle leaders' analysis of how well pupils are doing has been of variable accuracy.

The data shows that just under two thirds of pupils in Years 7 and 8 are meeting the targets set by the school for their attainment. However, in Year 9 less than one half of pupils are doing this. The most able pupils do less well than others when their attainment is compared to their targets. School data on the progress of pupils in Year 10 indicates that this remains low but has increased a little over this school year. For Year 11, progress over the year remained stubbornly slow.

There is little difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in key stage 3. However, in key stage 4 there are gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others. In addition, disadvantaged pupils' attainment does not show consistent improvement over time.



## **External support**

Immediately after the inspection, CFAT sought support from Golborne High School. This support clearly identified the depth of some of the weaknesses in teaching and learning at the school. In addition, it showed how pupils' poor behaviour was limiting the amount of learning taking place. The school's response to this was not sufficient to bring about the rapid improvement needed.

More recently, CFAT has commissioned TDT to provide comprehensive support by TDT taking responsibility for the operational leadership of the school and strengthening senior leadership. These arrangements are at an early stage and relationships between all those involved are in the process of being fully established. The interlinking of the work of the two trusts has the potential to cause uncertainty about who is responsible for what. This is complicated further by the need for the interim academy management board to have a clear reporting route to those with overall responsibility for the school.