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10 July 2015

Ms M Gentilli  
Principal  
The Littlehampton Academy  
Fitzalan Road  
Littlehampton  
BN17 6FE

Dear Ms Gentilli

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Littlehampton Academy**

Following my visit with Victor Chaffey and Peter Rodin, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 8 and 9 July 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Academy Council, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex and the Chief Executive of the Woodard Academies Trust.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve teaching in order to raise achievement by ensuring teachers:
  - accurately assess students' progress and plan work that reflects their previous progress and attainment
  - provide challenging work for all students, especially the more able, those of middle ability and those supported through pupil premium funds
  - improve students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, by providing frequent opportunities to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
  - insist that students take greater care with the presentation of their work so that they can refer to it when they revise for examinations
  
- Ensure that senior leaders, and in particular the Principal:
  - provide clear direction for the academy's work by concentrating on how to bring about rapid improvements in teaching and achievement
  - accurately evaluate the quality of teaching by focusing on how well students learn so that feedback and training for teachers are clearly directed at improving the progress made by students
  - make arrangements for all subject leaders to receive training to help them develop effective teaching in their subjects
  - work closely with parents to address their concerns about the quality of education provide for their children.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of the academy council by making sure members understand how to discharge their responsibilities for holding the Principal and other key staff to account for the academy's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. In addition, 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 governance may be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 July 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised planning documents. They met with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, a group of staff, the Chair of the Academy Council, a representative of the Woodard Academies Trust and groups of students. Aspects of safeguarding were checked. Inspectors looked at English and mathematics books from a selection of students in Key Stage 3 and Year 10. Inspectors observed 19 part lessons in Key Stage 3 and Year 10, many of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. During this visit, no sixth form lessons were observed because Year 12 students were on work experience.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, seven teachers have left the academy. Fourteen teaching posts are currently being filled by long-term supply teachers. The academy improvement board has recently been dissolved and a newly constituted academy council has been in place since the beginning of June.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Students' achievement continues to improve steadily. In many cases, these improvements are from low starting points. Stronger improvement is more evident in Years 7 to 10 than Year 11 because these students had more ground to make up as result of weaker teaching in the past. Students' achievement is better in English than mathematics. However, better leadership and improvements in teaching in mathematics are resulting in an improving picture, particularly in Key Stage 3.

Current assessment information shows that there continue to be differences in the progress made by different groups of students. In particular, gaps between the performance of disadvantaged students and their peers remain significant and more remains to be done to accelerate the progress of students eligible for pupil premium funding (additional government funding). In the sixth form, these gaps are closing more rapidly, although much smaller numbers of students are involved. Students who are disabled or those who have special educational needs are making better progress, especially in Key Stage 3, as a result of a carefully planned programme of support. The progress of the most able students is variable across year groups and subjects, often because they are given insufficient challenge in lessons.

Teachers are now making more accurate assessments of students' progress and attainment. They have worked effectively as teams and with colleagues from other schools to check their judgements. As a result, leaders are confident that assessment information is more reliable. Students have a much better understanding

of what they are learning, the progress they are making, where they are aiming for and how to be successful. The consistent use of 'flight paths' by students and staff is effectively supporting this process.

Improving students' literacy skills is a key priority across the academy. The importance and profile of these skills have been raised effectively in a variety of ways. For example, literacy has been a focus for assemblies and a parents' workshop has helped to explain to parents how they can support the development of their children's literacy skills. Work in students' books shows continued improvements in students' handwriting and presentation of their work. Teachers correct students' spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors frequently and use opportunities in lessons effectively to reinforce accurate use of subject-specific terminology. A numeracy coordinator has recently been appointed but it is too early to see an impact of this appointment.

### **The quality of teaching**

A wide range of effective strategies, primarily led by senior leaders, have been introduced to improve teaching. These have particularly focused on the use of assessment to track students' progress and ensuring that teachers' feedback to students is more effective. The monitoring of teaching is closely linked to teachers' appraisal and the provision of a range of bespoke training and support. The 'securing good progress' programme has been particularly effective in supporting teachers to improve their practice in a short time. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and an increasing proportion is good.

The quality of feedback students receive from their teachers has significantly improved and students appreciate these comments about the progress they have made and what they need to do next. Sometimes, however, students do not use this feedback well enough when they tackle future pieces of work or think about how these comments can be used to help them reach their targets.

Teachers are increasingly planning activities to meet the needs of different groups of students effectively. However, too often there is insufficient challenge for more able students. While teachers use questioning to check students' understanding and knowledge, they do not use it effectively enough to prompt, probe and deepen students' understanding and thinking.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The academy has strengthened its response to students' poor behaviour by effectively implementing a new behaviour management policy. This has successfully addressed poor behaviour that was not previously tackled. Students and staff told inspectors that behaviour has improved. This new regime has resulted in a significant increase in the number of sanctions applied to deal with poor behaviour as leaders 'draw a line in the sand' and set higher expectations of students' behaviour. As a result, exclusions are above the national average. Rates of internal exclusions are also high. However, academy records show that incidents leading to exclusion are less serious than they were. Exclusion rates for disadvantaged students have fallen more slowly than for other students. Indeed, these students made up 75% of all fixed term exclusions in the summer term. This, together with poorer attendance rates for this group of students is an issue that the academy needs to address. Leaders are aware of this and have prioritised action in both areas.

In many cases, good relationships between students and between staff and students were noted by inspectors. Students are showing their teachers and peers greater respect and this is beginning to create an atmosphere that supports the social and academic progress of all students. However, where there are weaknesses in teaching, students drift off task or find it difficult to listen to the teacher. Behaviour seen in and around the school at social times of the day was calm and orderly. Students take greater pride in their appearance and the academy environment.

Students say they feel safe in the academy and that there is very little bullying or racism. This is confirmed by academy records. The school uses all available agencies to support effectively those students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Students value the support provided to them through the 'chapter system'.

Attendance is improving very slowly and remains below the national average. Additionally, persistent absence rates have improved but remain below the national average. Systems are in place to monitor students' attendance more effectively. Students with high levels of attendance are celebrated in assemblies and this is helping to raise the profile and importance of good attendance. Disadvantaged students are still more likely to have lower attendance than their classmates.

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

The Principal continues to provide strong leadership. She maintains high expectations of staff and students. She is ably supported by other senior leaders. Leaders evaluate the performance of the academy accurately and honestly. They have taken appropriate action to improve teaching, often being prepared to make

difficult decisions to achieve this. As a result, with the exception of one teaching post that remains to be filled, the academy is fully staffed for September with permanent teachers. Teachers are held to account robustly for students' achievement. There has been a strong focus on regular monitoring of teaching by middle and senior leaders, and their judgements about the quality of teaching are accurate.

Senior leaders have developed middle leaders' skills more effectively so they are having a more direct impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Many of these middle leaders are growing in confidence as a result of valuable training and support. Increasingly, these leaders are sharing their good practice across the academy. They value the opportunity to deliver training to their colleagues and are using the experience effectively to reflect on their own practice and improve further.

Links between academic departments and pastoral support systems are not being used well enough to exchange valuable information about disadvantaged students in order to support them in the most effective ways. Leaders are aware that this issue needs to be considered more robustly as further improvement work takes place.

As planned, the academy improvement board has recently been dissolved and replaced by the academy council. The members of the council bring a range of appropriate skills and experience to the role from their professions in business, finance and education. The Chair of the Academy Council already has a secure grasp of what needs to be done for the academy to improve further. Woodard Academies Trust has provided useful induction training for council members.

### **External support**

The academy is working increasingly effectively with other schools to improve the quality of teaching and assessment. The trust has provided effective support to develop the skills of middle leaders and to form and train the members of the academy council.