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24 June 2013

Mrs Pamela Clulow  
Principal  
The Cheadle Academy  
Station Road  
Cheadle  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST10 1LH

Dear Mrs Clulow

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

Following my visit to your school on 21 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the executive principal, members of your senior team and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of students and observed parts of four lessons. I evaluated the school's action plans, reviewed examples of the school's data on students' progress and read the most recent minutes of governing body meetings.

### **Context**

Since the inspection in February 2013, the senior leadership team has been restructured: there has been an overall increase in the size of the team, to enable a greater focus on assuring the quality of teaching and learning, but a reduction in the number of Assistant Principals. There has also been a change of leadership in the History Department.

## **Main findings**

You, the executive principal and governors were disappointed with the findings of the February 2013 inspection but accepted them and have responded quickly to the challenges posed. You made immediate changes to the structure and composition of the senior leadership team and leadership of specific subjects, increasing the size of the team, to strengthen the direct monitoring and oversight of teaching and learning. You have increased the frequency of lesson observations and of assessment points in the school year and improved how students' progress data is presented and used. You have introduced a number of changes to the format of lessons and, through professional development sessions, made expectations much clearer to teachers. You have introduced a new marking scheme and a compulsory follow up period, in each lesson, for students to reflect, and act, upon teachers' marking and comments. The students whom I met highlighted this new marking initiative as the most significant recent development and valued it highly.

Your most recent review of teaching shows a high proportion of good or better teaching; however, this is at odds with students' current outcomes. Although you expect the national examination results for the current Year 11 to be the school's best yet, the predicted end of Key Stage 4 outcomes for the current Year 10 are significantly below where they should be. In future reviews of the quality of teaching you may wish to focus on what students' outcomes over the longer term say about the quality of teaching. Your new data format, which allows you to identify the progress made by students in specific teaching groups is a good development. You have strengthened the link between targets set for students and the management of teachers' performance.

Leaders have been slow to respond to the recommendation that a review of governance should take place. No such review has yet taken place, although the academy has purchased the services of an external consultant with a view to undertaking a review in the near future. I recommended that governors seek additional advice and support from external agencies such as the National Governors Association and the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

The post Ofsted inspection actions plans are unclear. There are several separate documents, in different formats, with no clear timeline of actions or milestones to check progress between now and when the academy is due to have its next full inspection. In the plans that I scrutinised, there was no mention of the specific groups highlighted in the February 2013 inspection: students who are supported by the pupil premium funding; middle ability students and boys. You do have data showing how these groups are progressing but this information is in separate documents, not in the action plans seen. Governors may find it easier to challenge you and your senior team if they have simpler, easier to follow plans and timelines.

I noted that the latest published attendance data showed that students eligible for free school meals had higher than average persistent absence. I recommended that this be tackled by your recently appointed Behaviour and Attendance Support Worker, who is currently working with Year 10 students.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- undertake a review of governance as soon as possible
- tackle the higher than average persistent absence of some pupils eligible for free school meals
- sharpen the academy's action plans

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The academy draws upon the support of its Executive Principal, who is a National Leader of Education, and principal of a local academy. The impact of the academy's loose partnership with this and other local schools is not yet discernible in students' achievements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**