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7 March 2014

Mr Des Herlihy  
Executive Principal  
Furness Academy  
Park Drive  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA13 9BB

Dear Mr Herlihy

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Furness Academy**

Following my visit with James McNeillie, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Alison Thomson and Steven Goldsmith, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 5 and 6 March 2014, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to 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 Governing Body and the Corporate Director of Children's Services for Cumbria.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, and reduce rapidly the variation in the quality of teaching across the academy, by:
  - developing and implementing an academy-wide strategy for improving teaching, monitoring its impact and holding staff closely to account for agreed actions
  - eradicating the few remaining instances of inadequate teaching and sharing more effectively the examples of good and outstanding practice across the academy
  - ensuring that lessons include opportunities for students to be more actively engaged in their learning and that teachers move them on quickly to more challenging work
  - increasing the impact of homework and marking, and checking more effectively that they are making a difference to students' learning.
  
- Develop and implement a focused strategy to rapidly improve achievement, so that it is at least good for all students, to include:
  - raising the expectations of staff of what all students can achieve, including through the use of challenging targets for every student
  - improving the impact of support provided for students with special educational needs, including through strengthening the work of teaching assistants
  - ensuring that funding provided through the pupil premium is effective in raising the achievement of those students for whom it is intended
  - eradicating any instances of poor behaviour that slow students' learning in lessons, and reducing further the time lost through fixed-term exclusions from the academy
  - improving the attendance of all groups of students, and reducing more rapidly the proportion of students who are persistently absent from the academy
  - ensuring that changes to the curriculum and decisions to enter students for external examinations at different points in the school year do not have a detrimental impact on the achievement of any students, including the most-able.
  
- Improve the strategic leadership, management and governance of the academy by ensuring that:
  - action planning is based on a thorough and accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy's performance, and that plans are regularly reviewed and updated in the light of progress
  - information about students' progress, attendance and behaviour is used to anticipate underachievement and respond more effectively

- leaders' checks on teaching quality are closely linked to a detailed analysis of the progress that pupils make in each subject
- performance management procedures include a close link between challenging targets for staff and decisions about pay and salary progression
- governors have a clear view of the performance of the academy and more effectively hold leaders and managers to account for improvements
- the governing body takes part in, and responds to, an external review of governance to identify what support and training governors need.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 5 to 6 March 2014.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of students and representatives of the governing body.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection two new English teachers, one mathematics teacher and one science teacher have taken up post. The Principal's post has been confirmed by the governors until July 2015. A member of staff has been suspended.

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

Academy tracking data show that achievement continues to improve. A lot of individual tuition is taking place at Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics, to try and address the legacy of underachievement.

The majority of progress seen by inspectors in lessons was good. Year 10 students were seen making good progress reading poetry with the head of English. Good progress was also observed in a number of mathematics lessons.

The academy's own tracking data show that those students who are eligible for the pupil premium are now making better progress. The gap between their achievement and that of their peers is closing. This is due to well-targeted interventions.

The progress of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is not improving quickly enough and targets set for their achievement provide insufficient challenge.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving. Some teachers whose teaching was of concern at the last inspection have now improved. There are a very small minority remaining whose teaching is not good enough.

Teaching is improving in physical education. It is now expected that all students participate in some way. Students were observed coaching each other but they were unable to say exactly what their peers needed to do to improve, due to a lack of clear assessment criteria. However, students learning how to trampolining with the head of physical education were given very clear demonstrations of good practice and very clear direction with regard to safety, which led to a very constructive learning environment and a positive 'can do' atmosphere.

In a Year 7 French lesson students made good progress due to good use of the target language and thorough planning by the teacher. Students were able to demonstrate correct pronunciation and apply their learning to different situations.

While the majority of teachers plan their lessons in great depth to meet students' needs, a few do not. For example, in a Year 11 design and technology lesson less-able students did not understand what they had to do and more-able students found the work easy. Consequently, students talked over the teacher, refused to answer questions and had their own conversations.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Senior leaders responded quickly and decisively to the issues raised around attendance, behaviour and punctuality at the previous monitoring visit. Students say that the introduction of high-visibility vests for teachers on duty makes them feel safer. The number of students who are late to the academy has reduced and procedures for greeting students who are late is much better organised and sympathetic to students' needs.

Many students feel that behaviour has improved since the previous monitoring visit. They feel that bullying is reducing and almost all students spoken to by inspectors feel safe in the academy and would know who to go to if they had a problem.

Exclusions have reduced significantly from the same period last year and attendance is improving. The attendance of those students who are educated off site is much more closely monitored, yet there is a group of five students who rarely attend the off-site provision for which they are registered. Senior leaders need to ensure they have done everything possible to engage with these students and help them overcome barriers to attendance.

Senior leaders have reviewed policies and procedures for child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and bullying. There is now a log of bullying incidents, including victims and perpetrators. However, actions taken to address bullying are not logged and the impact is not measured. There are not enough different ways to report bullying and it is not clear what procedures parents should follow if they suspect their child is being bullied or what a student should do if bullying recurs.

So many students have very respectful attitudes to adults and each other, complete homework and work hard in class, yet they receive no rewards for their consistent compliance with the rules. This is a missed opportunity to raise aspirations and self-esteem so students believe they can achieve.

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

The academy continues to improve but the pace of change now needs to accelerate. The Principal has meticulously deconstructed the letter from the last monitoring visit and successfully acted upon many of the issues. Clearly capacity is being built at senior leadership level. The leadership and management of behaviour and attendance are strengths of the academy and some senior leaders can demonstrate a very positive impact of their work.

While teaching is improving, it is not improving fast enough. This is leading to some low staff morale, particularly among middle leaders. Some teachers have improved as a result of improvement plans, but a few have not. This is because teachers are not always given specific feedback on how to improve their practice and the professional development they receive is not always of a high enough quality. Lesson observations do not focus enough on the progress of different groups.

The academy is currently spending approximately £40,000 on individual tuition for Year 11 students in English and mathematics, in an attempt to address the legacy of underachievement. Senior leaders are fully aware that this situation is not sustainable and that the day-to-day quality of teaching across the academy needs to be at least good.

Governors do not know enough about the standards students achieve. While they have reviewed new policies and procedures, they have not challenged senior leaders enough about how they will work in practice.

Governors and senior leaders are rightly reviewing the quality of provision for those educated off site. This issue stems from a group of students whose needs have not been met in the academy over a number of years and are now at risk of permanent exclusion. The current arrangements do not offer good value for money.

## **External support**

The academy continues to be supported by two external professionals. However, there needs to be more rigorous checks that the academy's targets are adequately challenging and that the quality of provision matches the academy's predicted results. Further external support will be needed to improve the quality of teaching rapidly and provide teachers with high-quality training.