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11 May 2011

Mr Ian Johnson
Principal
Marlowe Academy
Stirling Way
Ramsgate
Kent
CT12 6NB

Dear Mr Johnson

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Marlowe Academy

Thank you for the help, which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 10 May 2011, and for the information that you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank the trustees, sponsor's representative, staff, parents and carers, and students for making me feel so welcome and for helping me with the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has been restructured. There is currently a vacancy for the position of Vice Principal – Student Performance. A new Head of English has recently been appointed and will take up post later this year.

As a result of the inspection on 12-13 October 2010, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Systems and procedures to assess student attainment and track progress are effective. A reliable baseline has been established from which future progress can be measured. The academy's assessment data shows an improving trend in attainment. Results from examinations already taken indicate that outcomes for Year 11 students will be an improvement on those achieved last year but the target for 35% of students to gain five or more good GCSE grades that include English and mathematics is unlikely to be met. A literacy review has been completed and a specialist educational consultancy supports improvement in English and in embedding literacy throughout the academy. Attendance is improving and the proportion of students who are persistently absent is reducing.

Targets are realistic in relation to students' generally low starting points and they are reviewed regularly. Students are increasingly involved in evaluating their own performance, and the impact of training and support for teachers is evident in improvements in the use of assessment to match tasks and activities to the needs and abilities of different groups of students. Training has also been provided for staff to improve marking and feedback to students, and examples of helpful marking were seen. However, marking of students' work is variable and there is little evidence in some classes that the teachers' constructive comments are acted upon by students.

Rigorous and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning have ensured that senior leaders have an accurate profile of teaching and a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses across the academy. Strong action is being taken to eliminate inadequate lessons and improve the proportion of teaching that is good or better. Consequently, the profile of teaching is improving.

The academy has sought to improve communication with parents and carers and a Parent Voice email address has been established so that parents and carers can contact the academy directly. The Parent Voice, a forum for parents and carers led by a parent trustee, was promoted at the academy progress day in November 2010. As a result, over 100 parents registered their email addresses and others expressed an interest in joining Parent Voice.

The trustees' statement of action meets requirements and identifies how key priorities will be addressed. An improvement board has been created to monitor and evaluate the progress of the improvement plan. Two external educational consultants, who report directly to the trustees, were appointed to support and monitor improvement. Regular reviews are used effectively to monitor the progress of the academy and to plan for further improvement. Consultants and the academy's School Improvement Partner have provided a good balance of challenge and support that has helped the academy to begin to improve in significant areas of its work. Many of the initiatives are still at an early stage of development and it is therefore too early to judge their overall effectiveness on improving progress and learning. However, early indicators suggest that they are having a positive impact.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2010

- Improve progress and learning in lessons to raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that all teaching provides challenging activities that match the needs of all students and support the development of their literacy and numeracy skills
 - asking more probing questions in lessons which give students opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully especially for more-able students
 - ensuring that lessons are active to engage students and accelerate progress
 - reviewing targets more systematically with students so that they clearly understand how to improve their work.

- Sharpen the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including trustees in driving improvement by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly and new developments are evaluated against measurable criteria
 - intensifying the programme for spreading good practice in assessment throughout the academy, by coaching and mentoring
 - extending the capacity of leaders at all levels to manage their areas of responsibility effectively, especially in English
 - ensuring that the board of trustees seeks the views of stakeholders more systematically.