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Mrs B Allen  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Allen

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Bristol Brunel Academy**

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and students gave when Helen Griffiths, additional inspector, and I inspected your academy on 16 November 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. In addition, please pass my thanks to David Carter, Executive Principal, for the discussions we had about the structure of the Cabot Learning Federation and the development of post-16 provision across the academies within the partnership.

Bristol Brunel Academy is one of five academies within the Cabot Learning Federation. In 2007 it was one of the two academies which formed the federation and since then has been joined by three others, the last two in May and September of this year. Four of the academies are situated in the Bristol area and the fifth in Weston-super-Mare. Following the last inspection the development of post-16 provision across the federation was accelerated and now courses are offered across four of the academies within the partnership. The current Year 13 students are the first group to have completed their whole post-16 education with provision from across the federation. The Cabot Learning Federation has now been awarded teaching school status and the academy is a member of the Teaching School Alliance.

As a result of the inspection on 12-13 May 2010, the school 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 school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

September 2010



Since the last inspection students' attainment has risen sharply. For example, the most up-to-date data used for that inspection showed that 25% of students achieved five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics. The outcomes for 2010 showed that this proportion had increased to 45% and unvalidated results for this year show this improvement has been maintained. Over the same period, the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs overall rose 21 percentage points in 2010 to reach 83% which was significantly above the national average. Academy data for 2011 show this outcome has increased further and this reflects the success of the personalised curriculum offered to students. Outcomes for groups, for example minority ethnic students, boys and more able students also show clear improvement.

Attainment in English and mathematics has improved since the last inspection, often exceeding the challenging targets set for each subject. The academy data for 2011 show a consolidation of improvements made the previous year although the measure for the proportion of students gaining a good GCSE pass in each subject remains below the national average. Teachers of all curriculum subjects generally promote the focus on literacy and numeracy and this is supported through the learning communities programme undertaken by all teaching staff.

Measures of students' progress are detailed and analysed thoroughly to develop intervention strategies where underperformance is identified. There are well-organised intervention procedures in English and mathematics for older students. These include accelerated groups and the resources of the wider federation for support through, for example, extra teaching time for targeted groups and guidance from advanced skills teachers. As a result, data show increasing proportions of students making expected progress in English and mathematics. However, this is not an entirely consistent upward trend. Early predictions for outcomes in 2012 measuring expected progress in mathematics show a potential decline. Staff are aware of this and are working on the developments required following amendments to course specification. English and mathematics subject leaders are also working on developing more systematic intervention programmes for the younger year groups.

The academy has effective procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and supporting improvement. This system includes formal observations and themed 'drop ins' undertaken by senior and middle leaders. There is a positive and consistent approach to the use of questioning in lessons which has resulted from the professional development work undertaken by all teaching staff. In lessons observed, this effective questioning was clear and led to purposeful teaching and the active involvement by students in their learning. Teachers have high expectations of students' participation and behaviour but the presentation in some exercise books does not always reflect these high standards. The pace of lessons is generally effective but where this slows, students can lose interest and this affects their rate

of progress. Relationships are good and the academy's specialism in communications contributes to the development of a harmonious community.

Outcomes for post-16 students show improvement but this is not as strong as in Key Stage 4, reflecting the more recent development of provision across the federation since September 2010. The AS results in 2011 for the first cohort of Year 12 students to undertake courses across the federation show an improving pass rate compared with the previous two years of post-16 provision at the academy. However, they were still below the target for overall pass rate. New leadership, improved guidance to students and policy decisions such as specific entry requirements for courses, have contributed to improvement but this has not had time to work through to show a full impact on the outcomes for Year 13 students. The 2011 A2 results for the small cohort at the academy maintained the overall outcomes of the previous year with an improvement at the highest grades. Early indications for 2012 indicate an improved pass rate with the prediction for achievement at the highest grades being broadly in line with the target set.

The academy benefits from, and contributes to, the highly effective support available from the Cabot Learning Federation. There are good structures in place within the federation to support teaching and learning across the curriculum, provide extra teaching and leadership capacity when required together with focused programmes for professional development.

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 Pyner

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Increase the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics; strengthen the contribution made by all staff to developing students' skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Support staff in further enhancing their skills so that teaching in many more lessons is good or better:
  - raise teachers' expectations of what students can achieve in a lesson or series of lessons
  - ensure teaching is suitably challenging and engaging and learning is undertaken purposefully and with good pace
  - develop further teachers' skills in assessing the extent of students' understanding and learning in lessons through effective questioning or other means, and in adjusting tasks accordingly.
- Improve outcomes for sixth form students so that the vast majority of them reach the grades expected given their starting points.