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9 July 2012

Mr Wakefield
The Marlowe Academy
Stirling Way
Ramsgate
CT12 6NB

Dear Mr Wakefield

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Marlowe Academy

Following my visit with Peter Gale Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 5–6 July 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 17 November 2011. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) may be appointed in all subject areas.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the academy's trustees, the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit, the local Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the team inspectors.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
BUD.MAILBOX@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The local young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) if the school has a sixth form
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk]– for academies
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead and team inspectors.

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011

- Raise students' attainment and strengthen their progress, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers and students share high expectations
 - teaching consistently provides challenging activities that engage students' interests and maintain their motivation
 - lesson-planning and teaching match the needs of all students and support the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum
 - information about students' attainment and progress is rigorously and regularly reviewed so that interventions to tackle underperformance and loss of momentum are prompt and well-directed
 - students are encouraged to show initiative in their learning, to ask challenging questions and present independently explored arguments
 - a range of assessment strategies - such as probing questions in class, students' reviews of each others' work, and marking that combines praise with precise guidance – enables students to make good progress.

- Ensure that trustees and governors drive sustainable academy improvement by:
 - building capacity securely at all levels of leadership and management to improve provision and outcomes in all subjects and for all groups of pupils
 - holding the academy's leaders and managers to account for the impact of their work, setting challenging targets and promoting initiatives to raise students' attainment and accelerate their progress.

- Take further steps to improve attendance rates, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

- Ensure that sixth form students are guided onto appropriate courses and that their progress is closely monitored so that underperformance and loss of motivation are responded to quickly and effectively.

Special measures: monitoring of The Marlowe Academy

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 5–6 July 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, visited lessons and additional support sessions, and scrutinised documents. They met with senior and middle leaders, other staff and trustees, including the Chair of the Trustees. They spoke to students in meetings, in lessons and around the site.

Context

The academy has continued to be led by a full-time interim Principal, supported by part-time associate and executive Principals. All three are employed by a multi-sponsor academy chain contracted in by the trustees for this academic year to support academy leaders. The company has also provided a number of staff in other roles, such as advanced skills teachers (ASTs). Support will continue into the next academic year, but on a greatly reduced level. A permanent Principal has been appointed for September. She has been working in the academy for two days a week since the start of the summer term but was not present during this inspection. Seven teachers have left and five new ones have joined the staff since the last monitoring visit. The academy's complaint about the original inspection of November 2011 is not now being pursued.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Students' progress continues to improve, including in the key areas of mathematics and English. They are beginning to reverse past underachievement. However, much remains to be done to raise students' attainment, especially in literacy, and it is still well below average overall. Improved monitoring of students' progress, both to trigger additional intervention and support better teaching, is making a positive difference. For example, current Year 11 students had made better progress than last year's group by the time they took their recent GCSE examinations. In lessons, progress is improving because students have a greater awareness of what they are trying to achieve. In the more successful lessons, students engage fully in discussing the criteria for good quality work, build their speaking and listening skills and take more ownership of their learning. Where students do not gain a good understanding of key ideas or how to reach their targets, their progress remains slow. Students' progress in reading is improving and their attainment rising, although it remains below average. Improvements are inconsistent between year groups, with Year 9 notably lagging behind other year groups.

The progress made by different groups of students is becoming more even, but remains too wide. Disabled students, those with special educational needs and

students in receipt of free school meals, are catching up with others but continue to do less well. Boys' progress, while improving, is not doing so at the same rate as the girls. Sixth form students have been set more challenging targets. Their achievement in lessons is seeing similar gains to younger students, but their achievement remains inadequate because they are not making the securely good progress needed to make up for time lost in the past.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection:

- raise students' attainment and strengthen their progress, especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is strengthening with more staff delivering effective lessons. Some good and outstanding teaching is emerging, however improvements are not embedded and some inadequate teaching remains, including in the sixth form.

Teachers are making better use of assessment information to plan lessons. Overall, lessons are more challenging with the best, such as in drama and dance, seeing staff setting high expectations. Teachers more regularly use discussion to develop and check students' understanding of learning objectives and to improve their speaking skills. They more frequently work through examples of learning with students to help them absorb key messages, and see how to hit their targets. The needs of students of differing ability are being better met, for example with tasks at different levels. However, these features are inconsistent and in too many lessons, students do not know how to achieve well so as to be able to lead their own learning. Staff do not always identify quickly enough when this happens, or respond to the needs of students of differing ability. For example, in a number of lessons seen, too little use was made of small-group teaching to tackle issues common to a number of students. The deployment of additional adults to support disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved, with more evidence of adults well-briefed by teachers to carry out their roles. Nevertheless, this remains variable with additional adults sometimes unclear about what to do, and students not always feeling well supported.

Extra support sessions for literacy are well-targeted and making an increasing impact on key areas such as reading. Teachers' more frequent use of discussion is a welcome step in addressing students' weak speaking and listening skills. Teachers are rightly seeking to develop students' writing as well, for example by recording learning objectives and/or emerging ideas. However, this is not effective in all lessons, with lessons seen where students took too long to write the learning objectives or did not know how to keep useful notes on a discussion.

Marking continues to improve. There is greater consistency within and between subjects. Feedback to students about strengths and what to do next is gaining ground, but the impact is too often lost because students are not asked to respond to it, or to reflect on their work for themselves. Systems to record students' targets, current levels and progress in their books are improving and are valued by students.

Sensible steps have been taken to plan a better curriculum for sixth form students in September. Guidance has improved for current and prospective students so they are more likely to take on appropriate courses. In common with Years 7 to 11, teaching for sixth formers has seen satisfactory improvement but remains variable in quality.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection:

- ensure that sixth form students are guided onto appropriate courses and that their progress is closely monitored so that underperformance and loss of motivation are responded to quickly and effectively – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students approach lessons ready to learn. Students say behaviour continues to improve. More effective work by staff with targeted students, and the use of internal isolation, has reduced the regularity of serious incidents leading to exclusion. Better teaching and more consistent reinforcement by staff of expectations for behaviour is reducing disruptions in lessons, and incidents around the site. Attendance has risen well as a result of focused work with students and their families. It remains below average, including because too many holidays are taken in term-time. However, the gap is closing with fewer students persistently absent and more evenly balanced figures between different year groups. Better attendance in Year 11 contributed much to their improved academic progress. The recording of attendance is accurate in the main school, but there are occasional instances where sixth formers' recorded attendance is not accurate because their patterns of study mean they miss formal registration.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection:

- take further steps to improve attendance rates, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form – good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The capacity of permanent academy leaders to improve the quality of provision has improved well, reflecting the positive impact of the interim leadership team. Senior and middle leaders are more able to monitor their areas of responsibility and bring improvement, with secure gains in teaching and a good impact on attendance. The in-coming Principal has worked hard to involve herself in key decisions. Strategic

planning has been extended effectively to cover her transition into full leadership. Subject leaders have made good strides in developing improvement plans for their areas, showing better knowledge of strengths and weaknesses. The actions outlined focus on the right areas although they are sometimes too broad for subject staff to know precisely what to do, or for the impact to be checked easily.

Good progress has been made in setting up systems to improve teaching, and in building leaders' skills to bring this about. The impact in the classroom is not embedded but is growing, with some good and outstanding practice and the first certification to AST for an academy teacher. Leaders use lesson observations, data analysis and work scrutiny more effectively to drive improvement. Subject leaders hold staff more closely to account, and staff training is better linked to observations of teaching so as to address appropriate issues. Inadequate teaching is being robustly tackled.

A number of sensible strategic decisions have been taken for September, based on accurate analysis of the current position and future needs. Significant changes in the main school and sixth form curricula offer study for students at levels more suited to their need. A new leadership appointment in the sixth form is rightly intended to focus closely on ensuring better student achievement. A reorganisation of students into houses, with a 'head of house' in each, suitably ensures these staff support students' academic and personal progress. A review of provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is well focused on ensuring staff are more effectively prepared and deployed to support students.

Good steps have been made by the trustees to sharpen further their monitoring of the academy and the work to improve it. Their receipt of a wide range of evidence, and regular dialogue with leaders, has been augmented with training on the analysis of assessment data so they can check more carefully that student outcomes are improving. A small deficit budget has been set for next year, but satisfactory plans are in place for its recovery.

Progress since the previous monitoring visit:

- ensure that trustees and governors drive sustainable academy improvement – good.

External support

External support, mainly provided by the interim leadership team, has made a satisfactory impact on the overall effectiveness of the academy but a good impact on the capacity of leaders to move forward in crucial areas such as teaching. The proprietor's statement of action, submitted after the publication of the letter from the first monitoring inspection, dovetails effectively with other layers of strategic planning and is fit for purpose.

Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies, the post-inspection letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
BUD.MAILBOX@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The local Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) if the school has a sixth form– for academies use the following email address: ACADInspectionReports@ypla.gov.uk
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools.
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation

The letters should also be copied electronically to:

each member of the inspection team,

A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the:

Lead inspector