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Mr J Hickman
Headteacher
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Mansfield
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Dear Mr Hickman

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Manor Academy

Following my visit with Kevin Harrison and Charlotte Evers, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 10–11 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 in October 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.

The academy may appoint up to eight newly qualified teachers. There is no restriction with regards to departments or student year groups.

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 and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers regularly and frequently mark students' work and correct any mistakes
 - making sure that all teachers provide written guidance to students on how they can improve their work
 - making sure teachers use the information they gain from marking and assessing students' work to plan learning tasks of appropriate challenge
 - providing more opportunities in lessons for students to work collaboratively and independently
 - spreading the best practice in teaching to ensure that teaching and learning are of a consistently good quality.

- Rigorously monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and trends in the school's performance data and take swift and effective action to tackle any signs of underperformance this identifies.

Special measures: monitoring of The Manor Academy

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 10-11 July 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They also met with a headteacher of a local outstanding academy and an external consultant who are commissioned by the academy to provide support and challenge, and are referred to as support partners.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection a new deputy headteacher has been appointed and took up post on 1 April 2012. There will be 16 staff leaving at the end of this academic year; six posts are affected as a result of the completion of fixed-term contracts which will not be renewed because of a small fall in student numbers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

As a result of the focused efforts on improving the achievement of Year 11 students, the academy is confidently predicting better 2012 examination results when compared to the previous year. Predictions put the proportion of students achieving five or more A*-C GCSE or equivalent passes at 83% compared to 66% in 2011. The key measure of five or more A*-C GCSE or equivalent passes including English and mathematics is also predicted to rise from 49% in 2011 to 53% in 2012. The evidence for these predictions appears sound. The academy has significantly improved the way it tracks students' progress and has been able to use progress data to highlight students who are underachieving and take necessary action. While this is generally an improving picture, the predicted 2012 Year 11 examination results for mathematics highlight some inadequate achievement.

Students make broadly satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Academy data highlight a variable picture across different subject areas.

Since the previous monitoring inspection there has been successful work to improve the achievement of disabled students, those with special educational needs and also those students eligible for free school meals in Year 11. The progress data collated by the academy show that the gap between the attainment of these groups of students and students nationally has closed significantly. This improvement can be seen in English and to a lesser extent mathematics.

Academy data highlight some inconsistencies in the amount of progress students make in Years 7-9. For example, data show that few Year 8 students have made satisfactory progress in the academic year 2011-2012.

Students' progress in lessons is improving. Students' progress was at least good in about 60% of the lessons observed by inspectors. When students' progress was good or better the tasks they had been given were appropriately challenging and carefully matched to target grades. Inspectors observed students making outstanding progress in expressive arts, physical education and English lessons. In these lessons students were eager to achieve and levels of enjoyment were very high. In contrast, in most of the lessons observed in mathematics students made inadequate progress. Students were often left floundering because of confusing explanations of mathematical concepts and tasks that were not matched to their different abilities.

At the time of the previous monitoring inspection, students' poor presentation of their work was noted. Since then the academy has introduced the 'Super Seven' which is a useful set of expectations about presentation. Students are aware of the drive to improve presentation and there has been some improvement in their work.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise achievement – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous monitoring inspection although there remains a small proportion of inadequate teaching. Improvements in teaching can most notably be seen in the increase in proportion of good and outstanding teaching. Teaching in the sixth form was at least satisfactory. Inspectors observed 35 lessons and in 40% teaching was judged to be good and 20% outstanding. The strongest teaching featured: excellent relationships with students; clarity about what students needed to achieve by the end of the lesson; very effective interventions by teachers throughout the lessons to support, challenge and guide students; and questioning that really probed students' understanding. For example, in an outstanding dance lesson the teacher expertly intervened as students worked on a dance in the style of physical theatre. Each time she challenged students to improve their work; she gave expert advice and motivational praise. When teaching was good or outstanding resources and tasks were well matched to students' different abilities. As a result different groups made at least good progress and the gap between the attainment of academy students and students nationally was closing.

There is now a wealth of progress data for teachers to use when planning work. Data and teachers' marking are being used more effectively to pitch work at an appropriately challenging level when teaching is good or better. Some of the strongest teaching seen referred back to features that marking had highlighted and was used effectively as a starting point. When teaching was satisfactory or inadequate little use was made of the progress data and, despite students' prior attainment being very different, they were given similar work.

At the time of the previous monitoring visit, in many lessons teachers were using long explanations of target grades or levels which limited the time students had to work; it was clearly evident that this practice is no longer used. Opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills across all curriculum areas were missed. Teaching also missed opportunities in lessons to contribute to students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

Nearly all of the inadequate teaching observed was in mathematics lessons. In these lessons students with very different abilities were given the same work. Teaching failed to unpick what students understood and as a result did not tackle any misconceptions. The pace in these lessons was slow.

Teachers' marking of students work has improved. Marking is more regular and better highlights what students should do to improve. This is not yet consistent across all curriculum areas. In some curriculum areas, for example English, detailed marking was seen and comments from students in response which showed a purposeful dialogue between teacher and learner. Students informed inspectors that their books rarely got marked by temporary cover teachers.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is generally good. They are considerate towards each other and members of staff. In lessons the level of interest and enthusiasm about learning has improved compared to the time of the previous monitoring inspection. The proportion of students who have been excluded has fallen and overall is lower than the national average. When teaching is good or better, students respond with high levels of enthusiasm and become fully engaged with the tasks they are given. In many of the lessons observed students worked well both independently and collaboratively in groups. For example, in a drama lesson students were engrossed in their work and in groups thoughtfully reviewed each other's performances, suggesting helpful improvement points.

Students spoke with inspectors about how they have noticed improvements in behaviour in lessons and around the academy. They told inspectors that they feel safe and that if they have concerns about anything they can talk to their mentor. Students have also noticed that teachers mark their work more frequently and appreciate the opportunities they are given to respond to teachers' comments.

Attendance is above the national average. For a small group of students known to be eligible for free school meals and a group of students with learning difficulties, attendance is below the academy's average. Punctuality to lessons is generally good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The work of the senior leadership team has gained momentum since the previous monitoring inspection and there is a greater sense of ownership of improvement initiatives. The headteacher is ensuring that the senior leadership team is effectively managed and that levels of accountability reflect high expectations. The new deputy headteacher has made an excellent start and is now an integral part of the senior team. She has a very clear view on improvement strategies and significantly adds to the capacity of the academy. Improvement planning sets challenging targets and is appropriately being reviewed and refined to respond to how effectively change is being brought about. Senior leaders have clearly identified the weaknesses in mathematics and inadequate teaching elsewhere as the key areas to tackle next.

The monitoring of teaching continues and evaluations are honestly robust. During this monitoring inspection, all lessons were jointly observed by a senior leader and an inspector and the judgements of senior leaders were found to be very accurate. A recent review by senior leaders alongside the support partners made perceptive judgements and evaluations about the quality of teaching. Where teaching has been found to be inadequate or there are weaknesses, senior leaders have taken swift action. Teachers have been given an individual development plan which includes training and coaching from effective teachers. A significant amount of successful work has been done to ensure that training opportunities are suitably matched to teachers' needs. Coaching has also been adapted to meet the needs of staff and is ensuring best practice is being promoted across the academy.

The academy now has detailed data to show the progress and attainment of students in all year groups; this is an improvement when compared to the previous monitoring inspection when there was no in-depth analysis of data for Years 7 to 9. Data are now being used to identify underperformance and action is being taken to tackle this. The most significant work has taken place with Year 11 students; there is recognition that intervention work triggered by data analysis is not yet systematic across all year groups.

The role of the middle leaders has been a key focus for development since the previous monitoring inspection. Middle leaders spoke with inspectors and described

how they have felt empowered and have appreciated the opportunities they have been given to influence strategic decisions about improvement work. Senior leaders are increasingly holding middle leaders to account, making it clear that the quality of their leadership is reflected in the quality of teaching and students' achievement in the curriculum area they lead. Middle leaders are now more involved in monitoring and evaluating teaching and students' achievement. The quality of this work varies. In some cases there is a perceptive analysis of strengths and weaknesses, leading to tailored training, and evidence that the quality of teaching is improving consistently across the curriculum area. However, the leadership of mathematics has not brought about significant improvements in the quality of teaching and the progress that students make.

The governing body has increased the rigour in the way they hold the academy to account. This is in part due to the improvement in data they are now receiving and the general detail of reporting to governors. The governing body is aware of the key weaknesses that remain and acknowledge the need to continue to scrutinise specifically the progress made in tackling these.

Safeguarding requirements are met.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- rigorously monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and trends in the school's performance data and take swift and effective action to tackle any signs of underperformance this identifies – good.

External support

In general the support partners have provided good external support and moderation of monitoring work and have facilitated a number of advanced skills teachers to work alongside academy teachers. This work has not been effective in raising the quality of teaching in mathematics. While the work of the support partners has played an important role in improving the academy, it is evident that the academy's own capacity is now stronger so that its leaders will be able to take the steer in future work.