

## PROTECT-INSPECTION



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21 September 2012

Mr M Smith  
Principal  
Queen Elizabeth's Academy  
Chesterfield Road South  
Mansfield  
NG19 7AP

Dear Mr Smith

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Academy**

Following my visit, with David Muir HMI, to your academy on 19–20 September 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 a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, inspected 15 lessons taught by 14 different teachers and scrutinised school self-evaluation, policies and plans. They met with a representative of the sponsor, two members of the governing body, the Principal, senior and middle leaders and two groups of students.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

### **Context**

The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. A falling population locally means that the number of students is reducing, and so the academy has had to restructure its staffing. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is lower than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is higher than average. The proportion of students

with special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or supported at school action plus is low. The academy opened in January 2012 and is sponsored by the Schools Partnership Trust. The vast majority of staff transferred from the predecessor school, but a new Principal took up his post in April 2012 and a new Vice-Principal in September 2012. The academy has specialist status in English and in business and enterprise.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

The attainment of students and their progress in the predecessor school were low. A-level results in 2012, currently unconfirmed, indicate that both attainment and progress have improved considerably in the sixth form. There is also good evidence of improvement in Years 7, 8 and 9. Preliminary GCSE results are little changed overall. Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium have done better, as have boys. Analysis of Year 10 and 11 students' progress in class does show improvement now that the behaviour of students and the quality of teaching have both improved. Attainment is held back by the legacy of underachievement from the predecessor school and because some teaching requires improvement. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making better progress along with other students.

The use of data on student performance is an area of weakness. In the predecessor school, data was of uncertain quality, was not shared with teachers or subject leaders and was not used enough to identify students who were underperforming or to inform teachers' planning. As a result, the targets for students were far too low, and this is an important factor in the legacy of underachievement at GCSE. Much better data systems are now in place, and it is a matter of the highest importance that this data is now used to set challenging targets and to guide teachers to the appropriate level of challenge so that achievement rises rapidly to a far higher level.

Some students join the school in Year 7 with low reading skills. By Year 8, their skills have improved due to well-targeted reading support. Currently, these students do not have enough opportunity to practise reading aloud, and it is therefore a positive development that the school is training 14 older students to act as paired readers. This is a potentially very important initiative.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching has improved since January. Students attribute this in part to the much-improved behaviour in class. Teachers have to spend far less time managing incidents of poor behaviour, so they can focus on teaching and students can concentrate far better. The improvement is also due to the determined work of the Principal and his senior team to raise standards of teaching.

The school has a core of highly skilled teachers who also now act as lead teachers with time to spread good practice. In lessons observed, students in their classes made outstanding progress. Their teaching is characterised by:

- very clear lesson objectives
- very clear explanations
- questioning that draws out answers from students and gives them time to think
- planning that allows for variety of activity
- high expectations of learning and also that students will take responsibility and participate actively throughout the lesson
- excellent support for literacy in developing vocabulary and sentence structure across the curriculum
- a willingness to take risks in preparing imaginative lessons that develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

However, there is still too much teaching that requires improvement. In these lessons, expectations are lower as teachers are not as aware of the level of work needed to achieve challenging targets. Teachers' planning is less clear, leading to the teacher dominating the lesson too much and students taking an essentially passive role. Where students do work independently, there are lower expectations of their progress so that the pace of learning slows.

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

The behaviour of students has improved a great deal. There is a calm atmosphere in the vast majority of lessons and teachers' skills in maintaining good behaviour have improved. Behaviour is good around the school, and the Principal and his senior team are very visible at lunchtime and between lessons. Students now remain on the school site during lunchtime. The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen sharply. Attendance has improved, but is still not good enough.

Students now feel safe around the school and are much more confident that bullying is sorted out quickly. Students understand risk, and how to keep safe online. They feel proud of their school. Older students, in particular, are proud of their new uniform. Sixth form students have adopted a new and smarter dress code.

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

The academy has made particularly good progress since the new Principal took up his post in April. School self-evaluation and plans are clear and are of good quality. Senior and middle leaders and staff all share a good awareness of what needs to be done and understand the expectations on them to achieve the required improvement.

In the predecessor school, middle leaders were under-developed. In particular, they lacked access to high-quality data on students' progress. This led to targets that lacked challenge and to teaching programmes that were not demanding enough.

Better systems are now in place, but middle leaders and teachers are still not aware enough of how the data can identify underperformance quickly and how it should shape teachers' planning. In the sixth-form, however, standards have risen swiftly as the head of sixth form made very good use of such data as was available to intervene to ensure improved progress.

In the predecessor school, the performance management of teachers was not effective. Opportunities for teachers to improve their practice were limited and those teachers with high-quality skills were not given the time or the structured opportunities to spread their practice effectively. Good systems have now been set up that have the potential to bring rapid improvement, provided they are implemented and evaluated robustly. School senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching accurately and have a good understanding of the steps needed to improve the quality of teaching.

In the past, the school curriculum was narrow and did not meet the needs, interests and aspirations of all students well. Since September 2012 it has been broadened. It needs to become still broader in Years 10 and 11 if it is to meet the needs of those students whose current attendance is weakest. Plans to do this quickly are in place. Procedures for safeguarding are secure.

School leaders' success in improving teaching and student behaviour and the high quality of self-evaluation and planning lend confidence that there is capacity for the academy to continue to improve.

The governing body of the academy is now fully appointed. It has established an appropriate committee structure to monitor the school and provide strategic direction. Training has been provided for governors. The governing body is, however, currently very new in post and it is too early to assess its impact.

### **External support**

The Schools' Partnership Trust, as the academy sponsor, has provided good quality support for the academy. This has been across a wide spectrum including setting up high-quality data systems, along with support for particular subject areas and for many aspects of leadership and management.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the quality of teaching, using the outstanding and good practice currently in the school, to ensure that:
  - teachers' planning is at the appropriate level to secure good progress
  - students have more opportunity to engage actively and independently in their learning.

- Ensure that high-quality data on student performance informs the work of all staff to identify student underperformance, accelerate students' progress and inform teachers' planning.
- Robustly implement and evaluate the impact of the school's new quality assurance processes to ensure that consistently high-quality teaching is developed across the school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc      Chair of the Governing Body, Queen Elizabeth's Academy  
The Academies Advisers Unit, DfE