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Mr J Eldon
Principal
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Dear Mr Eldon

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Manchester Enterprise Academy

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 13 September 2012, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the students, leaders and member of the governing body who spoke with me.

Since the academy was inspected in January 2012 a further restructuring of leadership has taken place and student numbers have risen in Year 7.

As a result of the inspection on 12 and 13 January 2012, 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Unvalidated GCSE results for Year 11 students in 2012 show an improvement in nearly all the headline measures. Overall, these results point to stronger rates of progress than in previous years. Particularly welcome was the eight percentage point increase in A* to C grades in mathematics compared with 2011. These improvements are all the more pleasing given the attendance rates for that group of students had been the lowest in the academy. The progress of students in Years 7 to 10 also improved. These improvements are the consequence of higher expectations, stronger teaching, a clearer focus on actively involving students in their learning and providing more opportunities for them to develop their communication skills.

Teachers' higher expectations of students are the result of determined governance and leadership, particularly from the Principal. The target that 80% of teaching should be good or better by January 2013 is challenging. Nevertheless, staff are rising to this challenge and the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. Teachers are increasingly

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consistent in their approach to developing students' communication skills focusing, for example, on key words and opportunities for oracy.

A common format for planning lessons has students' learning at its heart, although practice is still developing as some objectives resemble tasks, rather than learning outcomes. Of the six lessons observed during this monitoring inspection, all had elements which were at least good. Two were outstanding in both teaching and learning. In the outstanding lessons clear, high expectations and a strong emphasis on student engagement were the norm. Pacey and challenging questioning helped the students work confidently and with at least good levels of independence to produce high quality work in design and technology and drama. Students, even those who lacked initial confidence, were able to articulate clearly what construction methods made a money box. Likewise, Year 7 students evaluated through 'freeze frames' and 'hot seating' issues relating to bullying. Behaviour in these lessons was exemplary. Teachers are also more confident in making decisions relating to the learning of their students. This demonstrates their increasing understanding that it is they who are accountable for how well the students in their classes are performing. An example of this was seen in a Year 11 mathematics lesson. On realising through good, ongoing assessment that students did not understand simultaneous equations or coefficients, the teacher quite correctly abandoned his prepared plan and focused instead on addressing the misconceptions. This he did successfully and, as a result, student confidence quickly grew. Further improvements to teaching and learning include the quality of marking which is increasingly focused on the learning the students have undertaken and what it is they need to do to improve further.

Other important improvements across the academy since the January 2012 inspection include attendance and behaviour. Attendance is up and improving and behaviour, as confirmed by the students themselves, is better. During this monitoring inspection good behaviour was observed. Exclusions continue to fall. Students spoken with were very positive about the direction the academy was taking under the leadership of the Principal. They were enthusiastic about the rewards available to them for good attendance and how lessons involved them in their learning. They were particularly pleased with the support they received if they had any difficulties. The students spoken with were well mannered and articulate, the latter demonstrating the increasing success of the academy's efforts to improve students' communication skills.

The January 2012 inspection report highlighted strong governance and the determination of the recently appointed Principal. These key features of leadership remain and are being strengthened. The governing body and the sponsors continue to be stringent in holding the academy to account for its performance. The statement of action is fit for purpose and has been improved to include measurable success criteria. The Principal is empowering his leaders and staff. The leading learning team and the 'Going for good' initiative have been well received and are both ensuring that resources and support are targeted where they are needed most to improve teaching quality. The academy's view of the quality of teaching and learning is accurate as demonstrated by the common judgements reached by both the inspector and all five leaders who observed lessons with him. A further key improvement

has been in the quality and regularity of assessments of how well students are performing. Fortnightly assessments in English and mathematics, for example, are strengthening the academy's view of which students are doing well and which require additional support. Already, leaders are wisely extending this approach to regular assessment to the foundation subjects. Students, staff and members of the governing body report with one voice much satisfaction with the improvements made. Such confidence places the academy in a strong position to do so further.

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

Yours sincerely

Mr Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

To improve further the academy was asked to:

- Increase the pace of students' learning and progress to raise attainment by:
 - focusing sharply on learning in the planning and delivery of lessons
 - fostering positive attitudes to learning by enabling students to participate actively in lessons
 - implementing coherent strategies for improving students' communication skills.

- At all levels, improve the leadership of teaching and learning by:
 - developing an academy-wide, consistently held view of what constitutes good learning
 - embedding a systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of learning
 - holding staff fully to account for the progress made by students.

- Raise rates of attendance, particularly for students in Years 10 and 11.