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25 October 2012

Mrs Helen Phillips
Principal
Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Girls
300 Victoria Avenue East
Blackley
Manchester
M9 7SS

Dear Mrs Phillips

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Girls

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 24 October 2012, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, students and representative of the sponsor who gave up their time to speak with me.

The academy moved to purpose-built new premises at the start of September 2012 and is located with Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Boys. Girls are taught separately from boys for most lessons and have different breaks and lunchtimes. Most staff work in both the girls' and boys' academies. The number of girls on roll has fallen from 915 at the time of the previous inspection to 743. There has been a substantial reduction in staffing and restructuring of staff responsibilities. Changes to academy governance are being considered.

As a result of the inspection on 8 - 9 March 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

In 2012, 38% of girls achieved five or more GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C. This was a modest rise from the previous year. Results in mathematics showed strong improvement, with more girls making the progress expected from their starting points. Girls' performance in science also showed improvement. However, results in English fell and too few girls made expected progress. Consequently, the academy's performance did not meet the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for attainment and progress.

The progress made by students currently in the academy has quickened due to better quality teaching, early identification of students' needs and the provision of effective



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additional support. Much of this support, including individual tuition, mentoring, a new reading programme and additional revision sessions, has been purchased using pupil premium funding, which is the additional government finance to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority. The academy's reliable data, confirmed by lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work, indicate that attainment is set to rise in 2013.

School leaders are aware of the need to accelerate progress and much work has been done to ensure that good learning is the expectation within lessons. Senior leaders and subject leaders visit lessons and check students' work regularly so they have good awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement in teachers' practice. The academy has been successful in largely eradicating inadequate teaching. An extensive programme of professional development, including coaching and sharing of good practice, has helped teachers to provide tasks that are more suitably matched to students' abilities, however in some cases teachers still do not vary work sufficiently to challenge the more-able girls. Most lessons follow a clear structure that enables students to make links with their existing knowledge, learn and apply new concepts and reflect on their progress. Girls respond well to this approach and say that they particularly enjoy lessons where there is an interesting variety of activities. Teachers try hard to engage all girls, including by asking questions in different ways and avoiding reliance on 'hands up'. Some ask probing questions that require girls to think deeply, however others do not draw out extended answers. This means that although girls give correct answers, they do not always explain their reasoning fully. Staff have been given clear guidance on how to help students improve their speaking. In many lessons, teachers emphasise appropriate vocabulary but students do not always have the confidence to use new words themselves or to put them into meaningful sentences. Some girls are very reliant on teachers to reassure and direct them. The academy's leaders recognise this and have begun work to develop girls' resilience and independence.

There is evidence of thoughtful, detailed and helpful marking. The academy has introduced a literacy marking policy so that errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation are indicated. Some girls write out spelling corrections at home but their response to their teachers' marking is not consistently checked and this results in errors persisting unnecessarily.

The academy places a strong emphasis on improving students' literacy skills in all aspects of its work. Independent reading is encouraged and its impact measured, through a new reading programme that most students enjoy. However, some students think that they have limited opportunities to use the academy's library. Leaders are planning to relocate the library so that it is more central to the academy and easier for students to visit.

Girls' behaviour has improved in lessons and around the site. Most girls respect the new academy building and think that it is making a difference to their education. Girls are divided into two equal 'schools', Rylands and Whitworth. This approach means that leaders get to know girls well as individuals and encourage a sense of friendly competition. Girls have good-humoured relationships with staff and each other, co-operate well in lessons when



they work in groups and are keen to achieve. They understand the academy's behaviour policy and say that the consequences for poor behaviour are applied in the same way by their teachers. They are looking forward to the introduction of the new rewards system. Girls' attendance has improved markedly and the numbers of students persistently absent from school is falling due to the hard work of staff in partnership with parents and other services.

The academy has made effective use of its creative and media specialism to provide opportunities for students to join in varied projects, often with a strong community dimension and a focus on literacy. Some students have worked with patients in a local hospital to produce and publish information leaflets about cancer care, while others have enjoyed working with professional script writer.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose and its action plan has been implemented. The academy has received particularly effective consultant support from the Schools Partnership Trust Academies. This has strengthened leadership, improved teaching and developed the capacity to raise achievement.

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

Mrs Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Cc Paul Carter, The Manchester College
Peter Tavernor, Chair of Governors, Manchester Creative and Media Academy



Annex

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

- Raise attainment across the academy, through judicious use of short-term and intervention strategies combined with longer-term strategic development of good-quality learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching further, concentrating initially on eradicating inadequate teaching and working collaboratively to move the satisfactory to good and then outstanding, so that students make consistently good progress from their starting points and regain ground lost earlier, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can do
 - ensuring lesson planning sequences episodes of learning effectively to make good use of time and to promote progression within lessons as well as over time
 - insisting that teachers apply policies consistently, including those for managing behaviour, the presentation of work and marking students' work.
- Develop students' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing to help their ability to reason, ensuring teachers model good practice in communication and follow agreed guidance on promoting literacy across the curriculum.
- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning by:
 - setting out and implementing consistently an academy-wide programme of rewards and sanctions for behaviour
 - gathering and analysing rigorously data on behaviour and attitudes to learning, including the impact of arrangements for grouping students
 - identifying and tackling the principal causes of and triggers for misbehaviour in lessons and around the academy's site

