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1 March 2013

Ms N Maytum  
Principal  
John Madejski Academy  
Hartland Road  
Reading  
RG2 8AF

Dear Ms Maytum

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of John Madejski Academy**

Following my visit with Angela Corbett Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 27–28 February 2013, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 25 January 2012. 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

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 Governing Body and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the capacity to sustain improvement by:
  - ensuring that provision, particularly teaching, is rigorously monitored, robustly analysed and evaluated against improvements in students' progress and attainment
  - developing a focused and coordinated approach to improving teaching and learning including through sharing of good practice, coaching and mentoring
  - ensuring that improvement plans include rigorous success criteria that are used to check on how well strategies are working
  - extending the capacity of leaders at all levels to manage their areas of responsibility effectively
  - developing the curriculum at all key stages, including the sixth form, so it better meets the needs of students
  - ensuring that the governing body, using accurate information and evaluation, holds all leaders and managers to account and is actively involved in setting the strategic direction of the academy.
  
- Improve the achievement of all students, across all key stages, particularly in English and mathematics, by eradicating inadequate teaching and significantly improving the proportion of good or better teaching ensuring that:
  - teachers plan lessons that are tailored to meet the different needs and abilities of all students, and monitor students' progress closely to ensure they are fully challenged throughout lessons
  - lessons actively engage and interest students
  - the support in lessons is improved for all lower-attaining students, disabled students and those with special educational needs
  - students' behaviour in lessons is managed consistently.
  
- Improve students' levels of literacy across the academy by ensuring that:
  - all teachers take responsibility for systematically developing confident and accurate speaking, reading and writing skills in the subjects they teach
  - teachers' marking and assessment pay particular attention to vocabulary, sentence construction, spelling, grammar and punctuation
  - students are given opportunities outside lessons and in tutor time to systematically improve their reading skills and develop an enjoyment of reading
  - intervention programmes are accurately matched to students' needs.

## **Special measures: monitoring of John Madejski Academy**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 27–28 February 2013**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, looked at documents and met with the Principal, academy leaders, members of staff, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, and external consultants who provide improvement services to the academy.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection in December 2012, five teachers have left the academy and six new teachers have joined. There are new leaders in post for English and girls' physical education.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

There has been a striking change in students' attitudes to learning across the academy. Students arrive in lessons ready to learn, and in most cases engage promptly in the 'do now' tasks which start most lessons. They are showing an increasing willingness and confidence to make positive contributions in class, by responding to teachers' questions or engaging in discussions about their work in small or large groups. Across the school, students are taking increasing responsibility for improving their own performance by assessing their own work or that of their peers against specific criteria.

Improvements in students' learning and confidence are underpinned by the success of the academy's drive to improve standards of literacy. Special reading programmes have achieved much success in substantially improving the reading ages for around a third of targeted students in Key Stage 3. Across all subjects, as well as in tutor periods and other activities, students are encouraged to read for pleasure, for research and out loud as part of class activities. Some students demonstrate much confidence in speaking and offering their views: for example, in assemblies students address large groups of their peers and adults. Students' writing skills are developing particularly well in those subjects, including English and the humanities, where teachers regularly remind students of the need for careful spelling, grammar and punctuation, and for a rich vocabulary. These subjects also set clear expectations for the development of students' ability to write at length. Students independently use the dictionaries and thesauruses which are readily accessible in classrooms to strengthen and enrich their writing. There remains a need to ensure that all subjects give students opportunities to write regularly and for a variety of purposes. The

celebration of high quality students' writing through displays across the school is recognised as a priority.

Internal data suggests that students currently in Year 11 are on course to exceed the national minimum floor standard for attainment by the end of the academic year. This means that more than 40% of students are expected to get five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics. There remain marked weaknesses in progress for some groups of students since they joined the academy in Year 7, which reflect a legacy of underachievement. However, the attainment of the national floor standard would mark a significant improvement. Attainment at A-level in the sixth form is likely to be lower this year than last, reflecting students' lower standards on entry, but sixth formers are on course to make at least expected progress in most courses.

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

- improve students' levels of literacy across the academy – good.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching quality continues to improve across the academy. The school's extensive monitoring records of teaching, as well as observations undertaken on this inspection, confirm that the proportion of good or better teaching is in the majority and is increasing. Inadequate teaching is much reduced and, for the first time, no inadequate teaching was observed on this inspection.

There have been marked improvements in aspects of teaching since the last monitoring inspection in December. The climate for learning is now much better across the school as teachers and school leaders implement more consistently the academy's behaviour policy. Students, in discussion with inspectors, say that teachers and other staff are now 'more strict' and make their expectations clear. Students say that, in most cases, this has contributed to much better learning in lessons. An atmosphere of mutual respect between staff and students now pervades most classrooms, as teachers offer much encouragement and praise while setting out clearly how students can further improve their work. Teachers' planning is now more consistent in its detail, especially in identifying the varying needs and abilities of students in their classes, and in pairing and grouping the students to support purposeful work.

The effectiveness of teachers' adaptation of tasks to challenge the more-able students and give extra support to those who find learning more difficult still varies across the academy, and often marks the difference between teaching that is good and that which requires improvement. Teachers are increasingly giving students greater responsibility for organising, evaluating and improving the quality of their own work. Students respond well to such independence, and there are strong

examples of this in applied and vocational subjects such as business and sport. Where teachers lead the lesson for too long, though, work can proceed at a slow pace and hold back the learning and creativity of some, including the more-able students.

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

- improve the achievement of all students, across all key stages, particularly in English and mathematics, by eradicating inadequate teaching and significantly improving the proportion of good or better teaching – good.

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

Students' conduct around the academy site remains calm and orderly, and their behaviour in lessons is much improved. The academy's behaviour and rewards systems are well-understood and increasingly effective in promoting such positive attitudes. Programmes such as the Year 10 'Heroes' scheme, promoted through the Human Utopia organisation, have also been successful in helping students take greater responsibility for their own actions and make a positive contribution to involvement in the life of the academy.

As part of a tougher line taken against unacceptable behaviour, the number of students permanently excluded has been high during this academic year. Academy leaders recognise the need to reduce the level of permanent exclusion and seek alternative solutions where possible. Overall attendance has steadily improved, but persistent absence remains a concern; it has a particularly adverse effect on the achievement of a small number of students in Years 10 and 11 in English and mathematics. Students are increasingly punctual to lessons, but too many are late to school in the morning and miss part of some of the valuable assemblies, tutorials and other activities which start the academy's day.

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

The Principal has been successful in establishing an effective senior leadership team whose actions are beginning to bear fruit in many respects. The leadership of teaching continues to very effectively balance the extensive monitoring of performance with support for teachers' professional development, and is yielding much greater consistency of practice in the classroom. Robust action has been taken against underperformance.

The capacity of middle leaders to take forward improvement in their subjects continues to strengthen. New leadership in English and mathematics, drawing effectively on support from external consultants, has successfully reshaped the curriculum and established clear expectations for the assessment and tracking of students' progress. Subject leaders have produced development plans based on

evaluations of the quality of provision in their areas. However, analyses and evaluations of performance of the academy, both at subject and whole-school level, continue to be adversely affected by the lack of readily-available data to chart the in-year progress of groups of students. This limits the capacity of leaders to 'drill down' and understand which groups are doing best and which need more help, and also to set clear success criteria against which improvement actions can be evaluated.

The governing body plays an increasingly active role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the academy. Governors' regular visits to the academy in their link roles provide valuable information to inform governing body discussions and decisions. Governors are setting increasingly demanding targets for academy leaders, and the academy development plan has now been sharpened with clear and measurable milestones against which progress can be measured.

The Principal has ensured that, while the academy's prime focus has been on improving teaching and learning in the classroom, it has not lost sight of the need to develop effective partnerships with its community. Many initiatives have been taken to extend parents' involvement in their children's learning, such as the Parent Power scheme to promote parents' and carers' understanding of aspects of the mathematics curriculum. Links with local primary schools continue to develop to help prepare students for arrival into the academy in Year 7. The University of Reading has supported a number of initiatives to improve teaching and students' literacy. The sports specialism continues to be very well managed to yield high-profile success for the academy in soccer and a range of other sports, including basketball and rugby.

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

- improve the capacity to sustain improvement – good.

### **External support**

External support from consultants continues to be successfully deployed in support of leadership and curriculum development, especially in English and mathematics. The leadership of teaching throughout the academy continues to draw effectively on external support, although this is much reduced now that the academy has built its own capacity in this respect. The work of the Human Utopia group on student behaviour, conduct and engagement has been successful in improving students' attitudes and self-esteem.