

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 01216 799154
Direct email: aidan.dunne@serco.com

28 June 2013

Nicola Maytum
John Madejski Academy
Hartland Road
Reading
RG2 8AF

Dear Ms Maytum

Special measures: monitoring inspection of John Madejski Academy

Following my visit with Shahnaz Maqsood, Additional Inspector, and Derek Wiles, Additional Inspector, to your school on 26–27 June 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 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.

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 the John Madejski Academy

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 26–27 June 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, looked at documents and met with the Principal, academy leaders, members of staff, groups of students, and governors.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in February 2013, three teachers, including the head of science, have left the academy and seven new teachers have joined.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The achievement of Year 11 students in GCSE examinations remains on course for a marked improvement this year. This is confirmed by the results in mathematics already attained by students entered earlier in the year, that are already showing a 7% improvement against last year's final results in those attaining grade C and above. There have been other notable successes too, including a high proportion of students gaining top grades in drama. While overall attainment remains below average and progress continues to be affected by the legacy of poor achievement in the past, the attainment of current Year 11 students looks set to be the academy's highest by a considerable margin.

Students' literacy skills continue to develop well from low starting points. Students across the academy are considerably more confident in speaking, listening, reading and writing than they were at the time of the last Section 5 inspection. During this monitoring inspection, students in Year 10 were observed in English and a range of subjects writing at length and with a clear focus on improving the skills they needed to develop, whether basic grammar for lower attainers or evaluative skills among higher attainers. Students are increasingly willing to share their writing with the class and offer evaluations of their own work and that of others. Displays of students' written work have steadily increased. Literacy interventions during tutor time continue to offer intensive programmes tailored closely to the specific needs of a significant minority of pupils. The positive impact of these programmes appears self-evident for many individual students, but data on students' progress is not yet comprehensive enough to offer a crisp evaluation of successes and weaknesses.

Students' learning was good in the large majority of lessons observed on this inspection. Attitudes to learning continue to be positive for most students, and are boosted by the high profile given to raising students' aspirations; for example, through highly motivational assemblies. As a result, school data indicates that progress has accelerated for all groups of pupils during the course of the academic

year. While gaps in achievement remain, they are closing for key groups, including those supported by the pupil premium, especially at Key Stage 3. Improvement in the attainment, learning and progress of groups of students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties at school action or school action plus has lagged behind that of others. There remain some lessons where students' progress is slowed as a result of instances of poor behaviour.

In the sixth form, students' achievement has continued to improve through the academic year and, while overall attainment is likely to be lower this year, pass rates are on course to be much improved. Achievement in vocational courses, including in the sports specialism, has been strong. Retention of students on sixth form courses across the year, especially AS courses in Year 12, has been a weakness. Academy leaders have set out to improve retention by appropriately reshaping the sixth form curriculum to offer more coherent routes of progression from Key Stage 4 courses. They have also strengthened the guidance given to students onto courses, and increased partnerships with other local providers to ensure that students get access to the right provision when they move on from Year 11.

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

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

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to take significant steps forward. Inspectors' observations confirmed the school's judgement, based on extensive monitoring evidence, that in the large majority of lessons teaching is now good or better. Lessons are now typically well planned and managed, with a close attention to grouping or seating students in ways that enable them to focus on their work or collaborate effectively with others. Teachers are increasingly encouraging students to take active approaches to their learning; for example, through moving around rooms or outdoor spaces to research information or measure objects or events, or to enrich their vocabulary through consulting dictionaries and thesauruses. The atmosphere in the large majority of lessons is calm and purposeful, with students ready to learn from the start.

A notable improvement in teaching since the last monitoring inspection has been in the effectiveness with which teachers use assessment information to match the challenge of tasks to students' different abilities. In many lessons, higher attainers rise successfully to challenges to develop their higher-level evaluative skills, while lower-attaining students benefit from 'scaffolded' frameworks and models to help them develop answers. Students therefore remain engaged on tasks and enthused in their learning. Teaching assistants are not always deployed to best effect in supporting the learning of individuals and groups in class, however. Teaching assistants are skilled, and their performance has been monitored thoroughly and

developed during the year, but in some lessons the teaching assistant is not given a clear enough role in supporting learning.

Teachers' marking is regular and offers students very helpful guidance on how to improve, although students do not always systematically comply with requests to complete or improve pieces of work. Teachers are increasingly encouraging students to assess the quality of their own work and that of others to help them understand where improvements are necessary.

Students' behaviour in lessons has improved very markedly during the last year because of students' improved attitudes, teachers' higher expectations and the impact of the school's behaviour policy. Nonetheless, the main weakness in most of that minority of lessons judged to require improvement on this monitoring inspection was in the management of students' behaviour. There remain, therefore, some inconsistencies in teachers' application of the behaviour policy and its expectations.

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

Rates of exclusion have declined since the last monitoring inspection reported that exclusions were high. There has not been a permanent exclusion since the last monitoring inspection, and days lost through fixed-term exclusions have declined sharply through the summer term. Students' behaviour around the school site remains orderly and calm.

While students' behaviour is much improved this year, there remain instances where poor behaviour persists during lessons, disrupts learning in class and holds back the progress students make.

Overall attendance has risen sharply; it is a little below the national average but in line with that of similar schools. There have been significant reductions in rates of persistent absence among students in Years 7 to 10. Academy staff now more rigorously track and follow up persistent lateness to school in the morning, so students' punctuality remains an issue but is steadily improving.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The Principal gives strong direction towards a vision for an academy which helps its students achieve their goals by teaching them well, offering comprehensive care, guidance and support, and engaging fully with the local community. This vision is

embodied in a new three-year development plan which focuses very effectively on the key elements required for success, and particularly on teaching, learning and the professional development of staff and leaders. The Principal recognises the need to ensure that all targets in the plan are sufficiently challenging to meet the academy's long-term aspirations and to build on the successes already achieved.

The senior leadership team continues to drive improvement successfully, especially in the quality of teaching, pastoral care and the development of the curriculum. The academy is on track against its key improvement objectives. Middle leadership is making an increasingly effective contribution. The leadership of mathematics and English has worked with considerable determination to promote better progress for students, and to strengthen teaching, assessment and the curriculum in these subjects. New leadership of provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs has been similarly determined in reviewing all aspects of provision to ensure that it is matched clearly to the needs of each student. Middle leaders are receiving an increasingly useful flow of data on students' progress, but some faculties and departments are only just becoming familiar with this information; some have yet to use it fully to inform their plans for improvement or to identify where gaps in achievement are evident and how to close these. Improving the use of data in this way is a key priority in developing the academy's capacity to improve.

The Chair of the Governing Body has given astute leadership in developing governors' capacity to hold the school to account through improved understanding of performance measures and monitoring information, while building governors' engagement through link roles with subjects and aspects. As a result, governors play an effective role in actively evaluating the work of the school and establishing targets for improvement. There will be significant turnover in staffing and/or leadership in English, mathematics and science departments for the start of the next academic year, and governors recognise the importance of securing stability in staffing. The governing body has developed its mechanisms for hearing the views of staff; for example, through staff-governor forums.

The specialist sports provision continues to offer excellence in provision and outcomes for students, and its ethos permeates many aspects of the academy's work.

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

- improve the capacity to sustain improvement – good.

External support

The academy has deployed external support judiciously to support leadership and teaching. It works extensively with local agencies to provide specific support for

PROTECT-INSPECTION



students whose welfare, wellbeing or achievement is vulnerable. It continues to develop links with other providers of education and training to broaden and deepen its curriculum, including through the development of alternative curriculum pathways for those with particular needs or interests.