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20 March 2014

Mr Robert Howard  
Heanor Gate Science College  
Kirkley Drive  
Heanor  
DE75 7RA

Dear Mr Howard

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Heanor Gate Science College**

Following my visit with Robert Steed, Additional Inspector, and Alan Brewerton, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18–19 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 12–13 September 2013. 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2013**

- Make sure that all teaching is good or better by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan high-quality, relevant learning in lessons that challenges and engages students
  - increase opportunities for students to learn in pairs and small groups
  - check students' understanding regularly during lessons and especially at the beginning of tasks.
  
- Raise the achievement of all groups, particularly the most-able and disabled students and those who have special educational needs by:
  - setting tasks appropriate to students' ability levels, making sure they are always challenging
  - ensuring that all sixth form students are placed on suitable courses.
  
- Improve behaviour and safety by:
  - reducing the numbers of exclusions, particularly of those who have special educational needs, through creating more effective, in-school behaviour management systems.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - evaluating the qualities of the college more realistically, including managing the headteacher's performance more rigorously, and acting effectively upon subsequent findings
  - creating a curriculum which meets the needs of the most able.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the college's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on insert date of 18–19 March 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed 21 parts of lessons, of which five were jointly observed with senior leaders. Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors also interviewed the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner. A number of the school's self-evaluation documents were scrutinised, including the updated school improvement plan, current assessment information, teaching and learning reviews, subject reviews, behaviour and safety logs, governing body monitoring reports and external reviews. Inspectors met with groups of students from the main school and the sixth form. Student workbooks were examined. Inspectors also observed students' behaviour during lunch and break times.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, two members of staff and three members of the governing body and academy trust have resigned. The academy is in consultation with the Department for Education to provide a suitable sponsor.

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

The academy has ensured greater reliability of internal assessment data compared to last year, especially in English. The current projected forecast for Year 11 outcomes suggest that there will be a marked improvement in both attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics is now above national averages. The proportion making more than expected progress in mathematics is better than the national average; in English, it is just below but improving fast. Low- and many upper-ability students are making better than expected progress. Whilst achievement is clearly improving for many students, some groups, such as those of middle ability, are still underachieving in both English and mathematics. In addition, the current attainment gap between students eligible for pupil premium funding and those who are not is not improving.

A complete review of target setting across the academy has taken place to help drive achievement. Nearly every student is now given aspirational targets; consequently, the ability profile of classes has significantly changed. This has had implications for both teachers and students, as expectations have now changed. The analysis of Key Stage 3 assessments reveals there is a great deal of underperformance by students, across most subjects;

many, especially the most able, are making little or no progress at all. The academy is well aware of this issue and is drawing up plans to ensure that rapid progress is made.

Achievement in the sixth form is better than last year across many subjects. There have been improvements made to assessment practices by teachers. The progress seen by inspectors in lesson observations was strong. There is currently no significant difference between the achievement of boys compared to girls.

### **The quality of teaching**

As a result of improved monitoring and tracking data, teachers now have a deeper understanding of the range of students' needs within their classes. Teachers are using this information to varying degrees of success. Where teaching is most effective, teachers target their questions appropriately to deepen students' understanding and prepare learning tasks to stretch and challenge the most able. Teachers have benefited from the range of training and development opportunities provided by academy leaders. Teaching assistants contribute well to the progress of less-able students because of their skilled guidance in lessons. When teaching is less than good, students are not motivated by the work provided; consequently, the pace of learning wanes and students' progress is stifled, especially from that of higher ability students. A small number of students who were interviewed by inspectors also reported that they experienced uninspiring lessons by some teachers.

The marking of students' work is inconsistent across the academy. Although there is greater use of the academy policy of pink and green pens by the teacher, there is little evidence that students are using the comments to improve their work.

The quality of teaching in the English and science departments is variable. There is still too much teaching that requires improvement or is inadequate; this is especially the case at Key Stage 3, where classes are often split between a number of teachers or taught by temporary teachers. There is much good-quality teaching in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

Overall, the quality of teaching in the sixth form is consistently better than the main school; students report that they are highly satisfied with their course choices and the level of support they receive from teachers.

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

Fixed-term exclusions have fallen dramatically since the last inspection. Students eligible for pupil premium funding, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs are not now over-represented in these figures. One reason

for this improvement is because internal seclusions and detentions are being used more to address breaches of the behaviour code in the classroom and around the school. Leaders have not carried out a full review of behaviour management systems and have not analysed trends in incidents. By not doing this, leaders are not in a position to tackle appropriately the causes of poor behaviour or understand the effectiveness of their current 'consequences' system. Presently, the academy behaviour system does not enable teachers to assume responsibility for behaviour in the classroom, as incidents can be escalated to senior level beyond initial warnings. A small number of students, interviewed during the visit, say there is regular low-level disruption in certain sets, although inspectors observed mainly cooperative and respectful behaviour in lessons and around the academy.

Attendance to school has also improved significantly and is now at 95.1%, which is higher than the national average. This is because of improved systems for monitoring attendance and the pastoral team's work with parents and families.

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

Leaders have further developed their plans for improvement by now including key questions which helps to focus monitoring activities, especially those led by members of the governing body. Self-evaluation reports demonstrate an increasingly accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Improved leadership in data tracking and monitoring has led to the identification of weak areas, such as Key Stage 3 progress; it has enabled leaders at all levels to develop sound strategies to address the key issues.

Rigorous and regular quality assurance activities have been introduced; the development of the 'Overall Performance Profile', which combines information from a range of monitoring information, has led to bespoke training and demonstrable improvements in teaching for many teachers. The use of external partners to support teacher development has been used selectively and effectively. Leaders of teaching have developed a coherent and strong programme for continuous professional development; teachers say they value the opportunities they have had to improve their practice.

The quality of subject leadership has improved across many subjects. Of the core subjects, science is weakest because teaching over time is not good; leadership of the English department has been strengthened by a deputy headteacher but this is not a long-term solution. Academy leaders are determined to establish greater stability in staffing and to make line management responsibilities clearer.

Academy leaders have improved performance management processes in order to further drive up expectations and standards. Targets for staff are now related directly to the progress made by all the students they teach, although they are not

specific to whole-school priorities, such as improving outcomes for the most able, as specified in the last inspection.

There have been a number of improvements to the curriculum; the range of course choices in Key Stage 4 has improved. For example, higher-ability students are now guided towards more academically suitable qualifications, especially in science. In the sixth form, more courses are followed which are suitable for progression to higher education. Sixth form students interviewed by inspectors praised the information, advice and guidance given by the school. Work with feeder primary schools is further strengthening the Year 7 curriculum in both English and mathematics.

As a result of a review of governance, a 'strategic group' has been formed, which has improved the way governors monitor the improvement activities of the school and hold leaders to account. Governors ask good questions of academy leaders to challenge the information they are given; they visit the school to form an independent view of academy progress. Governors' understanding of the impact of pupil premium funding is improving as a result of training. Performance management of the headteacher is also improved because interim reviews ensure that progress towards achieving targets is monitored closely. The Chair of the Governing Body is skilled and knowledgeable; he is leading important discussions with the Department for Education to establish suitable sponsorship for the academy.

### **External support**

The academy has received valuable support from a school improvement consultant. He has improved the way the governing body operates and has provided important guidance to its members. The consultant has also contributed to the academy's self-evaluation, producing accurate reports based on strong monitoring activities.

Local outstanding providers, such as Long Eaton, Rushcliffe School and George Spencer Academy have supported the academy's continuous professional development through the Outstanding and Improving Teacher programmes, as well as providing opportunities for staff to learn from best practice.