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13 June 2014

Mr Robert Howard  
Headteacher  
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 William Cassell and Kevin Harrison, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11–12 June 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 12 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 school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers because of the strong training provided for them.

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, the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire, The Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit.

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 third monitoring inspection on 12 June 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed 23 lessons parts of lessons, 18 of which were jointly observed with members of the academy's quality assurance team. Inspectors met with the headteacher and an external consultant, and senior leaders in charge of teaching, achievement, Key Stages 3 and 4, and special educational needs. The lead inspector also met with a group of teachers from the English, science and mathematics departments. Groups of students were interviewed and workbooks scrutinised. Updated achievement data and other monitoring information were evaluated. Governors' meeting minutes and reports from external reviews were examined.

The sixth form was not evaluated during this monitoring visit.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, a deputy headteacher, who was also the subject leader for English, has left the academy; the head of science resigned from his position and a new appointment has been made for this post from September. In addition, a new head of English has been appointed and a member of staff has been promoted to the senior leadership team to lead on quality assurance and performance management. The Department for Education has now agreed a sponsor for the school. Formal sponsorship by the George Spencer Academy Trust is due to commence from 1 September 2014.

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

The academy continues to ensure the reliability of assessment data. The current Year 11 students' projected 2014 examination results suggest that the proportion who will achieve five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics will exceed the national average. Students' progress in both English and mathematics is also set to improve and either meet or exceed national averages from most starting points. However, academy data show that the proportion of more-able students set to exceed expected progress is still too low for mathematics. Attainment and progress in science are improving compared to 2013, although progress in physics and biology is below national expectations.

Leaders are reviewing how they collect and analyse Key Stage 3 students' assessment information. Data analysis, which compares current assessments with academy 'challenge' targets, suggests significant underachievement, especially in English and mathematics. This may not represent underachievement compared to national expectations but data collection to measure this has not been carried out - leaders are now improving their data systems to better reflect progress over time in relation to national expectations. Evidence gathered by inspectors from direct observations suggests that students' progress in English and science across Key

Stage 3 is still too variable, and too many more-able students are not making sufficient progress.

The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is better than last year. This is because of the well-targeted guidance and support provided by the inclusion team. According to academy data, Year 11 students eligible for pupil premium funding are at least half a GCSE grade behind their peers in English and three quarters of a grade behind in mathematics. While this lag represents a considerable improvement compared to last year, leaders agree that more work is still necessary to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged students.

### **The quality of teaching**

Serious concerns remain about the quality of teaching in English and science. Too much teaching is still not good, especially at Key Stage 3. Insufficient challenge in lessons often holds back progress, especially for more-able students. Staffing in both departments has been unstable lately, but leaders have made suitable plans to ensure that by September both subject areas will be fully staffed and securely led.

The quality of marking and feedback has improved significantly since the last monitoring visit. Teachers are following the whole school policy more consistently; students report that they find the 'challenge' questions helpful in developing their understanding further. This improvement is a direct result of effective monitoring and improvement systems.

Teachers use students' assessment to inform their lesson planning. In Key Stage 3, students are mostly aware of their targets, their current levels and what they need to do to improve. Many teachers make thoughtful choices of teaching strategies appropriate to the aims of the lesson. In less successful lessons, however, some approaches, such as group work, are employed without specific purpose. Positive learning attitudes are a consistent feature of lessons; this is because teachers have worked hard to provide more engaging learning activities.

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

Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders have carried a full review of behaviour management systems. Logs have been analysed and leaders are acting upon the information to provide timely support and guidance for students. A recent review of 'behaviour for learning' shows that systems for addressing unacceptable behaviour in the classroom are becoming more embedded. Students report that teachers use the system and there are now fewer disruptions to lessons. While the number of fixed-term exclusions is declining, students with special educational needs are still over-represented. Overall attendance is now above the national average; the proportion

of students absent for more than 15% of the time is improving except in respect of those supported by school action plus.

Leaders have developed a range of support mechanisms to help students to achieve their potential. Support teachers work closely with subject teachers to ensure that students do not lose learning time when sanctions are imposed. Attitudes to learning in lessons are improving across the academy; very few incidents of low level disruption were observed during this inspection. Students' conduct in and around the school was often exemplary.

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

Leaders have wasted no time in implementing a plan to address the specific concerns raised in the last monitoring visit. 'The coaching programme' and other training activities are having a positive impact in the classroom. Teachers appreciate and value the opportunities to improve their practice, and staff have more trust in the leadership team. At the time of the monitoring visit, the academy was carrying out a 'learning review'. The quality assurance team, made up of senior and middle leaders, observed lessons jointly with inspectors and all accurately evaluated the quality of teaching.

The quality of leadership of pastoral teams, including the special educational needs department, is improving; systems are now more coherent and consistently applied. Subject leaders receive regular training and support. The leaders of the core subjects – English, mathematics and science – are supported by external leaders of education from the proposed sponsor's school. They have carried out a range of quality assurance activities such as lesson observations and moderation of students' assessments.

Leaders understand the need to evaluate the impact of academy improvement strategies. However, their reviews are not always clear and informative enough. This aspect of improvement planning is essential to enable the academy to deploy its resources effectively.

Leaders have made plans to improve the curriculum. From September there will be no classes split between teachers in Year 7 in English, mathematics and science. The Year 7 curriculum has been redesigned to ensure improved transition for students between the primary and secondary phase. Increased challenge for students has now been introduced into the Year 9 science and English curriculum by starting GCSE courses early. To provide more opportunities for achievement and challenge in Key Stage 4, leaders have insisted that the majority of students choose one subject from humanities.

The governors' strategic group continues to provide effective support and challenge to leaders. They are fully aware of how pupil premium funding is used and ask

pertinent questions about the data presented to them. They visit the academy regularly and report to the governing body. They continue to be well supported by the academy's commissioned improvement consultant.

### **External support**

A highly experienced external consultant supports the academy to quality assure its work and provide valuable support for the headteacher. Other advisers have also helped to develop aspects of teaching and learning, such as literacy. The partnership between the academy and its proposed sponsor has already begun. Leaders of education have worked closely with the academy in core subjects. The English and science departments report that they have benefited greatly from the development opportunities they have received since the last monitoring visit.