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30 January 2015

Mr Mike Smith  
Principal  
Queen Elizabeth's Academy  
Chesterfield Road South  
Mansfield  
NG19 7AP

Dear Mr Smith

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Academy**

Following my visit with Deborah Mosley, Additional Inspector, to your school on 27–28 January 2015, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement 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 not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures. I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to 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 Chief Executive of the Schools Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA), the Chair of the Education Advisory Board (EAB), the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, the Chair of the Queen Elizabeth Trust, the Academies Advisers Unit and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Eradicate variations in students' achievement in English and mathematics by robustly improving the weakest teaching in these subjects.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that all lessons secure at least good progress for all groups of students and encourage them to develop good attitudes to learning by:
  - making sure that all teachers use all the information they have about their students' previous learning to plan lessons and activities that will meet their needs
  - increasing the opportunities for students to think and find things out for themselves in lessons
  - giving students more chances to develop, apply and reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Rapidly improve the attendance of all students across the academy, so that it is at least in line with the national average.
- Improve the achievement of those students in the sixth form who are undertaking academic qualifications and increase the opportunities all students have to develop their employability skills.
- Strengthen the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to sustain improvement by:
  - developing the skills of subject leaders so that they take full responsibility for improving the quality of teaching in their departments
  - strengthening the analysis of information about students' progress in English and mathematics to support leaders and governors in checking on how well different groups of students are doing across all year groups
  - making the quality of academy self-evaluation and planning more accurate and realistic, so that there is a much clearer picture of the actions and milestones required in order for the academy to be judged good by July 2015.
- Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the academy. An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy'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 27–28 January 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised documents including the school improvement plan, the sponsor support and impact summary, school information about students' predicted achievement in 2015, minutes of Education Advisory Board (EAB) meetings and a sample of students' books in English, science and mathematics. They met with the Principal, the Vice Principal, members of the senior leadership team, the head of the sixth form, four subject leaders, two representatives of the Schools Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA) and the Chair of the EAB. Inspectors also met with a group of students and a randomly selected group of staff. The views of one member of staff, who wrote to inspectors, were also considered. Inspectors observed students' learning in 14 parts of lessons, five of which were seen jointly with members of the senior team. They made a number of shorter visits to classrooms to look at sixth form learning, students' attitudes to learning and the quality of literacy.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection a number of new appointments have been made, including two science teachers, two mathematics teachers, a history teacher, a music teacher, an English tutor, a mathematics tutor and a cover supervisor. In addition, a teaching assistant, a technology technician, a cover and exams manager, and a temporary Assistant Principal (teaching) have been recruited from existing staff. The new staff structure was implemented in January and will be fully operational in September 2015. This structure incorporates house leaders, and two inclusion managers for Key Stages 3 and 4. The number of temporary staff has reduced since the last monitoring visit. There are still two temporary teachers covering vacancies in geography and mathematics. An additional governor has joined the EAB, and all places on the board are now filled.

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

Amended information provided by the school shows that in 2014, the proportion of students gaining five A\*–C grades, including English and mathematics, increased to 40%. Leaders have taken some effective actions to improve the weakest teaching, particularly in English, but inadequacies remain. The progress that Year 11 students made from their starting points improved rapidly in English compared with the previous year and is moving closer to national averages. However, progress made by Year 11 students in mathematics remained similar to 2013. Students also underachieved in GCSE science. Teachers' predictions of students' achievement lacked accuracy, particularly in science. This meant that additional support provided was not always targeted at the students who required it. There were improvements in the attainment of disadvantaged students. They were less than one grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics. However, their achievement remains

too low in comparison to other students nationally. In 2014, boys underachieved in comparison to girls. The school trialled single-sex teaching in science, but this did not prove successful in raising the achievement of boys.

Leaders have put in place more robust systems for checking the accuracy of teachers' predictions. Teachers use the same work within departments to inform their assessments. Subject and senior leaders make further checks to establish the accuracy of teachers' assessments. External checking of assessments is carried out in English, but less intensive scrutiny takes place in other key subjects, including mathematics and science. Inspectors noted that students' work in mathematics and science indicates that they are still working at grades that are below expectations. Students' literacy skills, including their spelling, punctuation and grammar, are not as well developed as they should be.

Data provided by the school show that more favourable outcomes are expected in 2015. The progress that most students, including disadvantaged students and boys, are predicted to make in mathematics is moving closer to national expectations. The most able students are still predicted to have made less progress than they should in mathematics.

In the sixth form, in 2012/13, students on academic courses did not meet the 16–19 interim minimum standards. Students studying work-related subjects achieved well above the interim minimum standards for these subjects. The school's procedures for providing appropriate advice and guidance to students are increasingly robust. The head of sixth form interviews every applicant and there are now minimum entry requirements for A-level courses. These courses are provided in conjunction with the Mansfield Learning Partnership to extend the choice available. Assessment information provided by the school shows that sixth form students are expected to achieve in line with national averages in 2015. However, inspectors noted that the assessment information does not always match the quality of work produced by students, suggesting that some teachers' predictions are over-generous. Sixth form students will all be taking a qualification in employability skills in the near future, and all have the opportunity to attend suitable work placements. The proportion of students who do not go into further education or training at the end of their sixth form studies is low.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching remains variable and teachers' expectations are too low. Most teachers do not use information about students' abilities and needs to inform their planning. Consequently, all students work on the same activities, using the same materials. In the sixth form, students are sometimes left to work on their own without sufficient direction. Teachers' questioning skills are variable and many give answers before students have a chance to respond. This limits students' ability to think for themselves. Some students have no concept about the levels that they are working at, and are not able to explain how they can improve their work. Teachers

often give more thought to what they want to teach than what they want students to learn. This means that some students, for example the most able and those who speak English as an additional language, are not well supported in lessons. The most able students finish activities early and wait patiently for the teacher to notice that they have finished. As a result, these students do not progress as quickly as they should. Inspectors did note examples where teachers had planned students' learning effectively. For example, in an art lesson, every student had highly personalised targets to achieve. They were encouraged to reflect on their own work and the teacher challenged them through highly effective questioning. These students were engrossed in their work and made rapid progress.

Students' attitudes to learning are variable and often directly relate to the quality of teaching. When teachers plan effectively and know their classes well, students demonstrate positive attitudes towards new learning, focus well, and make better progress. Where teaching does not take account of students' capabilities, behaviour is often poor and students lack motivation. In some classrooms, there is a significant amount of low-level disruption. Inspectors witnessed several examples of low-level disruption that went unchallenged, for example students using their rulers to prod their friends, or singing and walking around the classroom needlessly. Students do not always fully engage in their learning, and some that finish tasks early wait patiently to be told what to do next, while others chat to their neighbour.

The quality of marking has improved, as a result of rigorous scrutiny by leaders. All books are now marked regularly. However, some inconsistencies remain across teachers and subjects. Not all teachers mark work in line with the school's marking and literacy policies. Students, particularly the least able and those who speak English as an additional language, do not always complete work. Teachers challenge this in their marking, but it is not effective, as they do not make sure students respond.

Students' literacy skills are not developed effectively across the whole school. Many students make literacy errors that remain uncorrected. Teachers use 'Strive for 5' boxes when marking work, but these are sometimes completed incorrectly. For example, some teachers indicate that students have used full sentences, when capital letters and full stops have not been included. In addition, teachers themselves do not always model good literacy skills. Inspectors observed teachers spelling words and using apostrophes incorrectly. Students have limited opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. Where literacy was encouraged, for example in French, the teacher coaxed students to pronounce words and construct sentences correctly. They were highly engaged and developed confidence in their speaking skills. In Year 10 mathematics, students learned about how to convert measurements through an exercise on calculating postage costs. These students were very appreciative of the opportunity to apply mathematics in a real-life context and also recognised that they were developing their reading skills. Inspectors saw very little evidence of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics,

apart from in design technology where students were encouraged to use 'the language of numbers'.

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

Attendance continues to improve and is moving closer to national averages. The latest published figures show that overall attendance in the last academic year improved to 93.2%. School figures for last term show that this figure is now 93.34%. Last term there were some increases in absence compared with the equivalent term last year, particularly for students in Year 11. The school now has a more robust system for monitoring students' absence, with clear trigger points, including the use of fines.

Staff expressed some well-founded concerns about an inconsistent approach to behaviour management. Students confirmed this, saying that 'some teachers just make threats and don't do anything.' Despite recent training in the updated behaviour policy, inspectors also witnessed teachers using the behaviour system inconsistently, or not at all. Some teachers do not use a 'level 1' sanction, which requires them to take responsibility for low-level misbehaviour in their classroom, by issuing students with a 10-minute detention. There are a very small number of external exclusions, in line with the SPTA's policy.

Students who are not wearing the correct uniform spend a limited amount of time in the school's exclusion room until this is rectified. Students take pride in their uniform and wear it well. Leaders see this as an important preparation for working life. Students are generally well behaved around the school site. They open doors for visitors, greet them politely and are highly respectful. Leaders have recently introduced a ban on mobile phones for both students and staff. This has resulted in fewer sanctions in lessons relating to their inappropriate use. Students with complex needs, including those relating to behaviour, are given effective support in the Learning Intervention Centre, before being reintegrated into classrooms.

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

The Principal has a clear vision for school improvement, and this is shared with his Vice Principal and other senior leaders. The school's development plan identifies challenging targets for improvement. Leaders' ability to drive forward rapid improvements in teaching has been severely restricted by the lack of cooperation from some teaching staff. Leaders and teachers are spending far too long preparing policies for agreement for implementation on, rather than improving teaching. As a result, teaching is not improving quickly enough, and not all leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching over time. Many members of staff are committed to the school and its students. Despite this, not enough staff take the improvement agenda seriously or recognise the need for rapid improvements in teaching.

Not all subject leaders have sufficient skills to carry out their role effectively, and some are having minimal impact on improving the quality of teaching in their areas. Some leaders remain unclear about their responsibilities for improving the quality of teaching. Their main focus this term has been on reviewing the quality of marking. They, and other leaders, have an inconsistent and overgenerous view of the quality of teaching.

Staff acknowledge that the opportunities for staff development, including voluntary ones, have increased this term. Leaders have more opportunities to attend suitable leadership development courses. Leaders have tailored staff training in line with what they know about the strengths and weakness in teaching. This training has not had any evident impact on improving teaching.

The single central record is fit for purpose. Leaders make appropriate referrals to the local authority in a timely manner.

The EAB is well established and its membership is complete. The Chair of the EAB knows the school well and is acutely aware of its strengths and weaknesses. EAB members are linked to faculties and lead on 'student voice' activities. As a result, these governors have a well-informed view of specific subject-related issues. The Principal values the support and challenge provided by the EAB. The SPTA and the EAB have regular communications and work effectively together.

### **External support**

The SPTA has not been successful in supporting the school to improve the quality of teaching rapidly enough. The Regional Director and the Academy Improvement Adviser, from SPTA, visit regularly. They provide a high level of challenge to the school's leaders. The sponsor's support and impact summary indicates wide-ranging support. However, this support is not always evaluated sufficiently to measure its effectiveness on improving teaching. The human resources department has provided effective guidance on implementing the recent school reorganisation. Recently, the SPTA has secured additional funding to improve the leadership of teaching further. It has also arranged additional external support to assist improvements in mathematics and science.