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27 February 2015

Mr Andrew Mackereth  
Principal  
The Parker E-ACT Academy  
Ashby Road  
Daventry  
NN11 0QF

Dear Mr Mackereth

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Parker E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit with Clive Allen and Martyn Ashmead, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 25–26 February 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 January 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint a maximum of five newly qualified teachers in any subject.

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 Chief Executive Officer for E-ACT, the DfE Academies' Advisers Unit, the Education Funding Agency, the team inspectors and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
  - have higher expectations of what students can achieve, particularly in their written work
  - use information on students' performance to set work at the right level of difficulty for students, particularly the most-able
  - apply the academy's policies on marking and behaviour management rigorously and consistently.
  
- Raise the achievement of all groups, especially the most-able students, and particularly in mathematics and science, by:
  - giving students a greater challenge and building on their successes
  - refusing to accept work that is clearly well below students' ability levels
  - marking work regularly and in detail so that students know that their efforts are valued and are able to understand how to make progress
  - preventing the poor behaviour of a minority of students from affecting learning.
  
- Improve behaviour and safety by ensuring that all teachers, including senior teachers, address low-level disruption and other poor behaviour consistently and rigorously.
  
- Ensure that leaders and managers increase students' achievement across all year groups, including the sixth form, and raise the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring middle leaders make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and provide effective support for those teachers who need it
  - replacing the current system used for tracking students' progress with one that is fit for purpose.

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 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 25–26 February 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised documents including: the post-Ofsted improvement plan; the self-evaluation summary; academy information about students' predicted achievement in 2015; minutes of the governing body's meetings; a sample of students' work in science, mathematics, travel and tourism, and engineering. Meetings were held with the Principal, other senior leaders and subject leaders for mathematics, science and work-related courses. The lead inspector also met with the system leader for E-ACT and the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body. Inspectors also spoke with members of the student senate, a group of sixth form students, and spoke informally with other students at lunchtime. They took account of the 40 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and the results of a recent staff survey carried out by the academy. They observed 21 parts of lessons, two of which were carried out jointly with a member of the senior team. The lead inspector considered the progress made in addressing the key recommendations that were identified in the previous inspection report, with the exception of the system used for tracking students' progress, which was considered at the last monitoring inspection.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, two new teachers have been recruited to teach English and mathematics. A teacher of modern foreign languages has left and been replaced by a lead teacher for this subject. One new governor has also started. Four temporary teachers are covering in English, geography, modern foreign languages, and information and communications technology (ICT). The Principal has created three temporary leadership responsibilities for pupil premium, British values and the most-able students.

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

Information provided by the academy shows that, in 2015, there are likely to be improvements in the percentage of students achieving five GCSEs including English and mathematics at the end of Year 11. The progress that students, including the most able, make from their starting points in English is predicted to be above national averages. There are also some predicted improvements in achievement in both mathematics and science. However, students' achievement is not as good as it could be in these subjects. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and others is widening; they are not improving at the same rate as their peers.

The academy's systems for tracking students' performance are continuing to improve and teachers have access to a wealth of information about their students. At present, leaders do not track the progress of students of different abilities as rigorously as other groups of students in the school. In addition, not all teachers use

this information effectively to plan their teaching and so the full impact on driving up rates of progress is not evident, particularly for students of differing abilities. Students' work in engineering and travel and tourism show that these students are making good progress relative to their starting points.

In the sixth form, data provided by the academy show that, in 2015, there are likely to be improvements in students' overall attainment at both AS and A level, although these predictions are still below national levels. The head of sixth form has now established a robust system for monitoring the performance of any students who are at risk of underachieving. These students are allocated a mentor to assist them with overcoming any barriers to learning. However, not all students regularly attend their mentoring sessions. There is evidence that, for those who do attend, mentoring is helping to improve their performance.

### **The quality of teaching**

Academy leaders continue to focus on strategies to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers do not always provide students with tasks that are matched to their abilities or particular learning needs. Their expectations of students' capabilities are not always high enough. As a result, students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their best. This is particularly the case for the most able. In some subjects, including mathematics, students are given the same work, regardless of whether they have previously mastered similar tasks. In mathematics, teachers develop students' mathematical skills, but do not always provide opportunities for them to deepen their mathematical understanding or apply their learning in different situations.

Some low-level disruption in lessons remains, usually where teachers do not cater specifically for students' specific learning needs. Inspectors noticed this in a few lower ability sets and in younger year groups. When teachers' questioning skills are weak, this sometimes leads to students calling out inappropriately. When teachers' questioning is effective, students are encouraged to reflect deeply. In one history lesson, the teacher listened carefully to the students' responses, and adapted his teaching to ensure that they could make rapid progress.

The quality of marking has improved, but variability remains, particularly between subjects. Teachers' marking in English is thorough and their feedback frequently offers students advice for improvement, to which they respond. In other subjects, the academy's marking procedure is becoming more embedded, although inspectors saw very few examples of students who responded to the teacher's comments. In mathematics, marking was mainly comprised ticks, and students' presentation skills were not routinely challenged. In this subject, students did not make enough use of their rulers, and diagrams were frequently drawn freehand. Teachers involved in work-related subjects are becoming increasingly rigorous in their assessment of students' work and progress. There are effective systems for checking that

assessment information is timely and accurate. The school leader for these subjects is rightly placing more emphasis on ensuring that students are well prepared for the tests.

Many teachers make reference to key words in their subjects. However, inspectors noted that the quality of students' communication skills is variable because they have limited opportunities to practise extended writing in subjects other than English. As a result, students' proficiency in writing is not always as well developed as it could be.

Sixth form teachers have increasingly secure subject knowledge. Sixth form students say that teachers plan more meticulously and engage them in helpful dialogue to improve their understanding of the subject.

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

Students behave well around the academy site. They are polite and respectful to visitors. Many of them demonstrate an increasing ability to manage their own behaviour. Students say that the new system of vertical tutoring has resulted in improved socialisation and harmony between year groups. Fights and other serious incidents, that were previously commonplace, are now rare.

A few students continue to disrupt some lessons. Occasionally, teachers do not tackle this effectively because they do not use the schools' behaviour management systems, which include removal from lessons. This results in these students making very little progress in their learning. Some staff and students agree that behaviour in some lessons is still an issue. However, inspectors noted that teachers are becoming increasingly adept at taking responsibility for managing the behaviour of their classes.

Attendance in 2014 was in line with national figures. Since September 2014, overall attendance has remained similar but the attendance of disadvantaged students has declined. This group of students is also more likely to be regularly absent. The attendance of students in Year 11 is a concern. Academy leaders have taken appropriate actions to address this and there is evidence that the attendance of these students is starting to improve.

The single central record meets statutory requirements.

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

The Principal continues to drive forward rapid improvements in the academy. He has a remarkable ability to empower those who work with him. The governors accurately credit him with 'energising his leaders'. His leadership team are growing in confidence as a result, and are becoming less reliant upon him. He recognises the

importance of communicating the improvements that are happening in the academy and is successfully building positive relationships with the local community. Students recognise the change in mood around the school and say that it is a much happier place to learn in. The staff are equally supportive of recent changes and the majority of those who responded to the staff survey agreed with the view that the school is well led and managed. Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the strengths of the academy and areas that still need to be improved.

Leaders' assessment of the quality of teaching is based mainly on lesson observations and does not take into account a wider range of information to support their judgments. Systems for performance management are increasingly robust. Performance management targets are rightly tied to school improvement priorities and link to professional development needs. Trained coaches are providing support to staff. There are a number of opportunities for staff development and coaches share good practice at morning briefing and after-school sessions. An increasing number of staff take the opportunity to attend voluntary training sessions. The impact of this additional training is starting to make a difference in the classroom.

Subject leaders are growing in confidence and have a greater responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and assessment. In English, mathematics and science, they are using internal and external checking systems to ensure that assessments are increasingly accurate. A member of the leadership team now tracks the progress of disadvantaged students and identifies how the additional funding has been spent. He has started to develop an appropriate system for recording individual expenditure to determine if it is effective.

A student senate has been established. This meets regularly and is chaired by the head boy and head girl. Students are well informed about the role of law and parliament. In their form time, they have a number of opportunities to discuss current news items, including those relating to diversity and tolerance. Students discuss topical issues in the news with a high level of sensitivity. Overall, they demonstrate an impressive understanding of British values. There is a coordinated programme of careers education which is well supported by external organisations, including businesses and local colleges. All students, including those in the sixth form, are given appropriate opportunities to consider the next steps in their education.

The head of sixth form is continuing to transform provision in this key stage. Students are now on appropriate courses and their engagement and attendance have improved. To meet the requirements of the sixth form study programme, they will have an opportunity to undertake relevant work experience, and those that have not passed GCSE mathematics and English will re-take these examinations in the summer. There are no plans, at present, to ensure that sixth form students are taught to be aware of potential risks to their health and well-being. However, during the inspection, sixth form tutors responded quickly to this and, during tutorials, they

led a thought-provoking session on radicalisation and the ways that students could keep themselves safe online.

The effectiveness of governors is improving and they are becoming increasingly autonomous. However, new governors still require further training and support. There is a much clearer delineation of responsibilities between the governors and the sponsor. Governing body members are aware of the strengths and development needs of the academy, including those relating to students' achievement and the quality of teaching. The post-Ofsted action plan is an effective working document, which is regularly annotated by governors during their monitoring activities. Governors could not provide detailed information about how the pupil premium funding is spent and whether it is making a difference. One new governor has recently assumed responsibility for monitoring this aspect. Membership of the governing body is now nearly complete, so the review of governance, recommended at the section 5 inspection, is planned to take place shortly.

### **External support**

The support provided by the system leader for E-ACT is highly valued. He has built a strong and supportive relationship with academy leaders and has worked to provide appropriate support. For example, he commissioned an external review of mathematics and this has resulted in a number of appropriate recommendations. He has also forged links with a local outstanding school to support the teaching of science. An external provider will be giving further support to the development of the sixth form. The sponsor, E-ACT, also facilitates termly subject leader forums for sharing good practice between academies. Recently, the sponsor took prompt action to ensure the security of the school site.