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14 May 2015

Mark Farmer  
Headteacher  
Moulsham High School  
Brian Close  
Chelmsford  
CM2 9ES

Dear Mr Farmer

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Moulsham High School**

Following my visit to your academy on 13 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the achievement of disadvantaged students. The inspection focused on the achievement of disadvantaged students and the impact and effectiveness of leaders, including governors, in improving outcomes for this group.

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders; the governor who oversees the achievement of disadvantaged students and those who are looked after by the local authority; parents and foster parents; groups of students from Key Stages 3, 4, and the sixth form; members of staff responsible for the achievement of disadvantaged students; and a representative from the local authority. I reviewed documents relating to the achievement, behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged students and looked at their books. I also scrutinised the academy's self-evaluation document and your academy improvement plan.

## **Context**

The academy was last inspected in November 2011 when its overall effectiveness was judged as good.

Most students who attend the academy are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged students who attend the academy is lower than that found nationally.

You have recently appointed a new deputy headteacher who is responsible for students' wellbeing, and a new co-ordinator for the achievement of children who are looked after. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed with effect from September 2015 who will be responsible for the achievement of disadvantaged students. The head of mathematics has recently resigned and a replacement has been secured for September 2015.

## **The impact of leadership and management in raising achievement of disadvantaged students**

The latest published data on the outcomes for disadvantaged students indicate that their achievement was lower than that of similar students nationally, and well below students who are not disadvantaged, particularly in mathematics. Between 2013 and 2014, the gaps in attainment of disadvantaged students in school and other students nationally widened in both English and in mathematics. However, it should be noted that a large proportion of these students joined the academy with low prior attainment in Year 7. In addition, case studies presented for these students indicate that some had complex needs which acted as a barrier to their learning. The internal data shows the gaps to be narrowing over time.

You have adopted a more strategic approach towards meeting the needs of these students and have reviewed and improved your systems for assessing their progress and attainment. The achievement of disadvantaged students features regularly on agendas for meetings between pastoral leaders, subject leaders and senior managers. This helps leaders and managers quickly identify if a student is falling behind and enables them to put suitable support plans in place to ensure these students get back on track.

The achievement of disadvantaged students features highly in the academy's self-evaluation and strategic planning documentation and you review the impact of improvement initiatives regularly.

Teachers are acutely aware of their responsibility to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged students are met through their teaching. They know which students to target and have identified effective strategies to ensure their progress accelerates as they move up the school. All teachers of Years 10 and 11 are expected to identify

effective strategies which help individual students make progress. This information is shared among teachers so that they adopt a common, successful approach is taken to the teaching of disadvantaged students. Teachers provide detailed written feedback to disadvantaged students so they know how to improve their work, but more work is needed to ensure that students give consistently high quality responses to this guidance.

Leaders ensure that the most vulnerable students receive the guidance they need to make a sustainable transition to employment, training or further education at the age of 16. Senior leaders monitor the destinations of school leavers, including those in the sixth form. Disadvantaged students in the sixth form have high self-esteem and many aspire to go to prestigious universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Your links with the vast majority of primary schools is highly effective which ensures a smooth transition to secondary school. Your summer school, which targets the disadvantaged students at the end of Year 6, is well attended and prepares students well for their secondary school career.

Senior and middle leaders make good use of detailed assessment information to review the progress of disadvantaged students. The pupil premium funding is used well to target bespoke support for individual students. Strategies have included one-to-one support for English and mathematics, including home tuition, the purchasing of additional study materials or equipment, and financial assistance towards educational visits. Evidence from the academy's assessment data and my scrutiny of students' books show that gaps in attainment are closing. The gaps in attainment are closing more quickly in English than in mathematics. However, some gains are also being made in mathematics, particularly by students in Key Stage 3.

The governing body shares the high expectations of senior leaders and monitors closely the achievement of disadvantaged students, more so in English and mathematics than in other subjects. The achievement of disadvantaged students is reported on regularly to the governing body and governors ask pertinent questions to ensure that the progress of these students remains a high priority for the academy.

The attendance of disadvantaged students has improved compared to the previous academic year, but remains below that of other students in the academy. However, it compares favourably with similar students nationally, although disadvantaged students in Year 10 attend less well than their peers from other year groups. Similarly, the proportion of disadvantaged students who are excluded for a fixed period of time has declined steadily year on year, but remains below the national average.

## **External support**

The local authority has maintained strong links with the academy since its conversion to academy status and continues to provide a good degree of support and challenge. The Standards and Excellence Commissioner visits the academy regularly to monitor the academy's work. Appropriate support and challenge has been provided during these visits which have included a focus on the achievement of disadvantaged students in mathematics. This has resulted in targets being set and subsequent follow-up visits to check on progress. This support has had a positive impact in improving standards.

### **The strengths in the academy's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- There is a clear determination to provide high quality education for all students including those who are disadvantaged and those who are looked after.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students is central to improvement planning.
- Leaders, managers and governors effectively monitor the achievement of disadvantaged students. Interventions to support these students are appropriate and well targeted. Disadvantaged students feel well supported.
- Transition, support and guidance are a strength. The summer school for disadvantaged students is well attended and meets students' needs.

### **The weaknesses in the academy's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- Recent changes to the staffing of maths have improved the quality of teaching and the progress made by students, but have yet to have a marked impact on externally validated outcomes. Key stage 3 data shows significant improvement in closing the gap.
- The attendance of disadvantaged students does not yet match that of others in the academy, particularly in Year 10.
- Students are not consistently acting on the guidance teachers give them in order to improve their learning
- Governors do not have as clear an understanding of how well disadvantaged students achieve in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure students' achievement in mathematics is at least as good as in English.
- Ensure the attendance of disadvantaged students matches that of their peers.
- Ensure that disadvantaged students respond to their teachers' guidance consistently well.
- Provide governors with more detailed information on how well disadvantaged students achieve in subjects other than in English and in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Essex, to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **The letters should also be copied electronically to:**

- The relevant Senior HMI
- The relevant Regional Director
- Each member of the inspection team
- Marilyn Mottram HMI ([Marilyn.mottram@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:Marilyn.mottram@ofsted.gov.uk))