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Mr Chris Steed  
Headteacher  
Malcolm Arnold Academy  
Trinity Avenue  
Northampton  
NN2 6JW

Dear Mr Steed

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Malcolm Arnold Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 21 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 academy's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I held meetings with: you; members of the academy improvement board; the deputy headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning; the deputy headteacher with responsibility for progress and the curriculum; the attendance and welfare officer; and representatives of the sponsor. I accompanied you and the deputy headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning on a tour of the academy to see the learning that was taking place. I held informal conversations with several students and members of staff as I toured the academy. I evaluated the sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan. I also evaluated a range of documentation, including records of the monitoring of teaching and learning.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, you have appointed several lead practitioners in mathematics, English and science who will take up their posts in September.

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

You have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching at the academy. Senior leaders have revised their systems for evaluating the quality of teaching. They take into account students' progress over time and work scrutiny, as well as information gathered during learning walks and lesson observations. You ensure that appropriate support packages are put in place, and regularly reviewed, in order to help individual teachers improve their teaching. This has been effective in rapidly improving the quality of teaching so that inadequate teaching has been eliminated.

With the leadership team and the sponsors, you have nurtured a sense of collective responsibility among all staff for the academy's improvement. You have achieved this by ensuring that everyone has regular and relevant training and professional development opportunities. Teachers share and develop good practice by visiting each other's classrooms and observing each other's teaching. Staff are out and about between lessons and break times. This forges good relations between staff and students and promotes your high expectations for conduct and mutual respect.

Senior leaders meet regularly with subject leaders to review the progress of students in Year 11. They identify students who are underachieving and make sure that each student receives the specific support they need to help them to improve. You have reviewed and refined the curriculum, teaching responsibilities and timetabling of mathematics and English to optimise the opportunities for students to make the progress of which they are capable. While your immediate focus has been on Year 11, you have started to implement similar strategies in Year 10 and the rest of the academy.

Senior leaders have established effective policies and systems through this academic year, founded on your high expectations of all staff. This has led to greater consistency across the academy; for example, in the use of the marking and feedback policy. Teachers provide students with clear written feedback, often related to assessment criteria, which enables students to have an accurate view of what they need to do to make progress. Teachers provide students with the opportunity to respond productively to feedback in lessons. Leaders are aware of the areas that need further development so that this practice becomes more consistently embedded across all subjects.

You have established an effective behaviour policy. Leaders analyse behaviour logs carefully so that rapid support is given to students to improve their engagement with their learning. Leaders also ensure that teachers receive the support they need to

manage behaviour successfully and to forge positive working relationships in the classroom. Senior leaders have provided training for all staff and boosted communications with parents in order to raise the profile of the importance of good attendance. You have introduced measures such as the 'remove room' and reward systems which are successfully addressing poor behaviour and poor attendance. Improvements in behaviour and attendance are evident in these early stages.

You and other senior leaders are supported very well by the sponsor. The academy improvement board meets every fortnight and provides a combination of challenge and guidance that is valued highly by you and your colleagues. The level of scrutiny, and the accountability of senior leaders to the academy improvement board, especially in the early stages following the inspection report, have ensured a concentrated focus on addressing the areas for improvement urgently and effectively. Senior leaders appreciate, and are helped by, the professional insight, support and advice provided by the representatives of the sponsor.

You receive support from the sponsor, not only in strategic planning but also in a very practical sense, with, for example advisers working regularly in the academy, providing leadership development, coaching and training in key areas. Representatives of the sponsor also contribute helpfully to teaching, and forge productive links with other schools and academies. You are currently working with the academy improvement board to form a local governing body.

The sponsor's statement of action and your post-Ofsted improvement plan address directly the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. The two documents complement each other very well. Cross-references between them are clear. You specify those individuals who are responsible for monitoring aspects of the plans and, as appropriate, these are different from those responsible for leading an action. Timings for the completion of actions are realistic and rightly reflect the prompt response to areas for improvement identified, not only in the last inspection but in the academy's self-evaluation. Success criteria are aligned with your high expectations for the pace of improvement and are quantifiable whenever possible. Your arrangements are clear for informing parents of proposed actions, taking their views into account and keeping them updated with progress.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Academy Improvement Board, and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of the Governing Body  
cc. Local authority  
cc. The Education Funding Agency