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19 June 2015

Mrs Mary Gould  
Head of School  
The Matthew Arnold School  
Kingston Road  
Staines  
Surrey  
TW18 1PF

Dear Mrs Gould

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Matthew Arnold School**

Following my visit with Victor Chaffey and Gill Walley, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 17 and 18 June 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 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 academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures and may continue 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 Chair of the Interim Academy Board and the Director of Children's Services for Surrey.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
  - raise their expectations of what students can achieve, plan tasks that are sufficiently demanding and challenge students to give of their best when their work does not meet the required standard
  - make better use of information about students' prior learning and attainment when planning, especially for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, so that work is matched more closely to meet their learning needs.
  
- Urgently improve the achievement of all students by:
  - improving standards of work in English, mathematics and science
  - increasing the percentage of students achieving the highest GCSE grades
  - improving the quality of students' writing in all their subjects so that they are not held back by their weak written communication skills
  - ensuring that teachers accurately mark students' work, especially in English, to provide clear guidance to students on how to improve their learning, is used to set challenging targets and to identify students who are falling behind
  - sharing the methods that more successful departments are using to raise standards.
  
- Improve students' behaviour and safety by:
  - improving making sure all students meet an acceptable standard of behaviour in lessons so that time is not lost
  - ensuring students take pride in what they do and challenging them to do better when their work is scruffy or when they are disrespectful
  - rigorously checking on students' absence, particularly those eligible for additional funding
  - ensuring the record of bullying incidents is clearly organised and rigorously monitored so all bullying incidents are properly followed up.
  
- Improve leadership and governance by:
  - ensuring the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding are robust and put into practice well
  - making sure that when leaders evaluate the quality of teaching there is greater emphasis on the impact of teaching on students' achievement
  - leaders giving governors the information they need and governors using the information rigorously to hold leaders to account.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 June 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with the head of school, other senior staff and middle leaders, the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Interim Academy Board (IAB), and groups of students. Inspectors observed 26 lessons, of which 25 were jointly observed with academy leaders. A range of documents were analysed, including the academy improvement plan, students' progress information and records of monitoring activities.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, six teachers have left and four teachers have joined the academy. The Director of Learning from the academy's sponsor, the Bourne Educational Trust (BET), is now working at the academy several days a week.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

The quality of students' learning in the majority of subjects is improving. Achievement is stronger in English and mathematics than science. Faster and more secure learning is evident in a range of other subjects, including humanities and languages. The standard of students' written work is steadily improving across most subjects. The quality of learning of students with disabilities or special educational needs is improving as a result of better-organised provision for them.

Students in Year 11 have benefited from intense support and specialist teaching. As a result, the academy is expecting the proportion gaining at least grade C in five or more subjects, including English and mathematics, to improve this summer. The academy's data show the proportion of students in Year 11 making expected and better progress in English and mathematics is greater than last year and in line with national levels.

The academy now collects and analyses information about students' achievements at the end of each term. This information is used to identify students who are not on track to meet their targets. Teachers and pastoral leaders use this information to provide useful support to help them catch up. When students are progressing well, targets are raised to provide extra challenge. Students spoke confidently about what they needed to do to reach their targets in many subjects. Although the achievement data are proving useful to track the performance of individual students, the information is not presented consistently across year groups or subjects. This makes it difficult for academy leaders and members of the IAB to judge the impact of actions taken on the rates of students' progress.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching continues to improve. Students with whom inspectors met were clear that, in general, the quality of teaching is now better than in the past. Where teaching is most effective, teachers continually check students' understanding of key ideas throughout the lesson, including by close questioning. Teachers then respond by revisiting ideas covered, or by accelerating students on to more demanding work to take their learning further. However, too much teaching still overemphasises the completion of activities and does not prioritise the quality of students' learning. During some lessons, teachers moved students onto the next activity without checking whether they were ready. As a result, some less-able students were left behind and the most able did not always have the chance to deepen their learning.

Teachers' planning is improving and many lessons are more engaging. Teachers are developing their skills to probe more deeply to stimulate discussion. Strong relationships between teachers and students are promoting better learning. However, there is still some less-effective teaching. Teachers do not always plan for the needs of individual students well enough. This means that less-able students are not given sufficient support and the most able are not challenged. Students described how some teachers have lower expectations of behaviour and the standard of work required than others. Leaders are well aware of weaknesses in teaching and are taking effective steps to tackle them.

Useful marking was in evidence across most subjects and students say this has helped them improve their work. In some cases, teachers provide precise guidance which students respond to and follow closely. Examples of the best marking are used to help other teachers improve the quality of their feedback to students.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The majority of students now behave well in lessons. Most are motivated and have positive attitudes to learning. However, when teaching is less effective, some students lose concentration and become distracted. The atmosphere around the academy at break and lunchtime is pleasant. A few students are a little boisterous at times, but they respond appropriately when staff challenge their behaviour. Leaders have strengthened the academy's behaviour management systems and, as a result, there has been an increase in the proportion of students receiving sanctions. These higher expectations, coupled with improved teaching, have significantly improved the behaviour of students. Students generally wear the uniform with pride.

Arrangements for monitoring safeguarding have been improved further. Bullying is now carefully logged and is uncommon. Students say they continue to feel safe in the academy, but teachers do not always effectively challenge students when they use discriminatory language. Leaders must make sure students understand that discriminatory language is not acceptable and that teachers effectively challenge students when they use it.

Attendance overall is slowly improving, but the number of students with poor attendance is still too high.

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

The head of school continues to lead the academy strongly. She communicates her expectations clearly and is determined to secure the confidence of students and parents. She is supported effectively by senior leaders. The improving leadership skills of the subject leaders are adding considerably to the capacity of the academy to drive improvement.

Leaders continually monitor the quality of learning across the academy. They are increasingly focusing on the impact of teaching on students' achievement to make more reliable judgements. They use an analysis of teachers' development needs as the basis of effective training and support for staff. The impact of the training is checked carefully. Teachers and middle leaders are keen to improve, and use lesson observations and joint planning well to share good practice. Many teachers who are new to teaching are benefiting from this well-targeted support and are rapidly improving.

Academy leaders have focused heavily on improving provision for Year 11 students. The school's assessment information about these students is detailed and has been checked for accuracy. Leaders have not given the same level of attention to the progress of students in other years. Students in Years 7 to 10 have benefited from improvements in the quality of teaching and behaviour in the school. Nevertheless, the systems for tracking the progress made by groups of students lack clarity and are used in different ways by subject leaders. Academy leaders are now taking steps to establish secure assessment information for all students against which targets can be set. The academy's development plan still lacks success indicators for each year group against which progress can be judged at clear stages and this needs to be rectified.

Members of the IAB are knowledgeable and discerning. They have high expectations of senior leaders and conduct regular visits to ensure they know the academy well. They expect to see rapid improvement and clear evidence of the impact of leaders' actions. Steps are underway to establish a full governing body.

## **External support**

The academy continues to be supported extensively and effectively by its sponsor, BET. The executive headteacher has ensured that the academy is fully staffed next year with an increasing number of subject specialists. In addition, the secondment of experienced teachers and leaders to the academy from other schools in the trust is raising the effectiveness of leadership and improving the quality of teaching. The local authority provides regular reviews of the academy's progress, which leaders and members of the IAB find helpful.