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16 December 2015

Mr Jon Angell  
Principal  
The City Academy Bristol  
Russell Town Avenue  
Bristol  
BS5 9JH

Dear Mr Angell

**Special measures monitoring inspection of The City Academy Bristol**

Following my visit with Tim Gilson and Howard Dodd, Ofsted Inspectors, to your academy on 1 and 2 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015. 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:

**Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

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

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for the City of Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015**

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, by ensuring that teachers:
  - use information on pupils' abilities and needs to provide adequate support for those that have low levels of literacy and/or weak English language skills
  - have the highest expectations of the amount of work pupils complete and the presentation of this work
  - provide suitable work for the most-able pupils to challenge them to think more deeply about their learning
  - effectively question pupils to assess their understanding of key concepts and ideas and to probe and deepen their learning
  - ensure that pupils act on the feedback provided to improve their learning.
- Raise achievement across the academy, particularly in Years 7–9, in mathematics and in the sixth form by:
  - implementing an effective and consistent approach to developing pupils' literacy and communication skills
  - raising expectations of what pupils are able to achieve
  - providing carefully targeted and effective support for disadvantaged pupils to speed up the progress they make.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
  - develop a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching by linking it closely to the progress pupils make over time
  - robustly analyse the impact of all extra support sessions so that pupils in them make good and better progress
  - link with leaders from a good or better school to learn from their effective leadership practice
  - set regular targets and timescales within the academy development plan to monitor the progress that the academy is making.

An external review of review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1–2 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, inspectors met with the Principal and with other members of the academy's leadership team. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and with the Chair of the Interim Academy Board. A representative from the Cabot Learning Federation attended both inspection team meetings, along with the Principal. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils from all year groups and talked with other pupils at various times in lessons and around the academy. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons, where they also looked at examples of pupils' work. All visits to lessons were made alongside members of the academy's leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including records of the checks on teaching and minutes of governing body and of interim academy board meetings. They checked information about safeguarding, including the single central record of checks on staff recruitment. Inspectors looked at behaviour and attendance records as well as at a draft copy of the safeguarding policy. The academy's improvement plan was also evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the agreement with the Cabot Learning Federation to provide support to the academy has been extended until August 2016. This includes confirming the position of the current Principal, full time, until that date. The academy leadership team now comprises the Principal, four assistant principals, and one non-teaching senior leader with responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion, and who is also the designated safeguarding lead. A new human resources manager has also recently been appointed as part of the support agreement with the Cabot Learning Federation. Seven teachers have left the academy and three new appointments have been made.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Important aspects of safeguarding are in need of urgent improvement. Oversight of safeguarding by governors at the academy has been inadequate for some time. Leaders are aware of these shortcomings, some of which have only recently come to light. The new leader in charge of safeguarding has been instrumental in uncovering a legacy of poor practice and is working energetically to tackle these concerns. In tandem with support provided through the Cabot Learning Federation, leaders have begun to take action to put right these weaknesses.

- The single central record is not a complete or fully accurate record of the checks on staff suitability to work in a school. During the inspection, leaders were able to establish the accuracy of the great majority of entries on this record. Although

only a small number of omissions remain, further work is urgently needed to make this record fully secure. Leaders are currently working to remedy this situation.

- The academy's systems for reporting, recording and escalating concerns about pupils who might be at risk have been ineffective for some time. Leaders have recently taken action to greatly strengthen these systems, but the lack of good-quality historical records has the potential to place some pupils at risk. In addition, while almost all staff at the academy have received child protection training, a small number remain who have not yet received this essential training. Leaders are taking action to address these issues as a matter of urgency.
- The current safeguarding and safer recruitment policies are both out of date. Although a new safeguarding policy is currently being drafted, this has not been presented to governors, and is not yet supporting working practices at the academy. An appropriate range of policy documentation, including the child protection and safeguarding policies, is not available on the academy website. This, together with other shortcomings, means the academy website does not currently comply with statutory requirements.

As a result of these weaknesses, safeguarding at the academy is currently ineffective. It is for this reason that leaders and managers are judged not to be taking effective action. Despite being aware of failings in the single central record, leaders' and governors' actions to remedy these were not initially rapid enough.

Other aspects of the academy's work show improvement since the last monitoring inspection. Leaders and managers are taking effective action to improve teaching and the quality of education for pupils at the academy. The leadership of teaching is increasingly effective and is rooted in a secure analysis of strengths and weaknesses across the academy. Following a review of appraisal arrangements, staff are now much more accountable for the quality and impact of their teaching. Leaders' approach to improving teaching is gradually moving from a focus on certain required features in lessons to a sharper view of how teaching leads to pupils making good progress. The review of the use of pupil premium funding, led by leaders from within the Cabot Learning Federation, has validated the keener focus on the best-quality teaching for all pupils.

In the same way, the contribution of middle leaders to improving teaching is also growing. Most are developing their skills well, and have a good understanding of how their role will complement the work of senior leaders. Opportunities to work with effective leaders in other schools have provided a valuable external perspective on the attributes of effective subject leadership.

Leaders have also worked hard to develop an improved curriculum in Years 7–9, which is intended to provide a more secure foundation for GCSE examinations in the future. There are early signs that these developments are having a positive impact,

particularly in mathematics. However, shortcomings in the design of the curriculum in science have led leaders to review its aims and content.

Following the external review, important actions have been taken to strengthen governance. For some time, governance has been ineffective. For example, the lack of a proper programme for the review of policy documentation has meant that important policies have not been checked and are out of date. In response, and working with senior staff from the Cabot Learning Federation, an interim academy board has been set up. This is intended to work alongside the academy governing body, but provide a sharper level of challenge and support for academy leaders. Although it is too soon to see any significant impact arising from these new arrangements, there are indications that the interim academy board will be well placed to provide the level of oversight needed, particularly with regard to safeguarding.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils' achievement is beginning to improve, although there are important differences in outcomes across the academy. In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, increased and the academy is now above the government's current floor standard. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils also improved and the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils narrowed when compared to the previous year. More pupils are now making better progress in English and mathematics, including in Key Stage 3. In contrast, achievement in science and in the sixth form remains inadequate. As yet, there is too little impact from actions taken to speed up progress in these areas of the academy's work. Overall achievement in humanities is also an area of continuing concern.

The quality of pupils' work is improving. They are expected to present their work neatly and to take pride in what they produce. In some lessons, the feedback pupils receive about their work helps them to improve. However, this is not yet the case throughout the academy. Not all teaching is effective at helping pupils to improve their writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Sometimes, pupils complete work that is too easy, such as copying out information from textbooks or from the board. This lack of challenge in many of their lessons is the main reason that pupils, including the most able, are not yet making faster progress.

The focus on literacy is also helping pupils with disabilities or special educational needs to learn more effectively, particularly in Years 7–9. Leaders keep a close eye on any underachievement and provide useful support to help pupils get back on track. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also making better progress, although they are not always provided with work that takes account of their existing skills, knowledge and understanding.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The overall quality of teaching is improving. More teaching is effective in helping pupils to make up for past underachievement. However, despite these improvements, not enough teaching is strong enough to raise standards fast enough, including in the sixth form. Where pupils make slower progress, it is often because teaching demands the same of all pupils. Sometimes, pupils spend too long completing easy work, or they are content to drift along because teaching does not expect them to take part more effectively in lessons.

Where pupils learn well, expectations are high and they are pushed to think hard about their learning. Effective questioning helps pupils to develop their ideas and to put right their misconceptions and mistakes. For example, in mathematics, the regular recap of learning helps to pinpoint where help is needed and to direct teaching more effectively. Pupils appreciate the feedback they receive in many of their lessons. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, pupils use their exercise books in a way that resembles what might be seen in undergraduate notebooks – with jottings and comments that help them to improve their work. However, not all feedback results in work of this quality. For example, in some cases, books are not marked in line with leaders' expectations, or the marking provided is ineffective in supporting pupils' learning.

Leaders have ensured that targets and assessments are benchmarked more rigorously. This has helped to make sure that expectations of learning and achievement are higher, particularly in the sixth form. Action has also been taken to strengthen the provision for learners who are resitting their GCSEs in English or mathematics. However, sixth form learners say that the way they learn in some lessons is not challenging enough. Nevertheless, they enjoy the range of enrichment activities on offer and value the support they now receive to improve their organisational and study skills.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Behaviour in lessons and at other times continues to improve. Pupils say there is a more consistent approach to managing behaviour, particularly when disruption in class sometimes gets in the way of learning. Although the academy is an orderly environment, pupils say that some staff could do more to intervene effectively when the boisterous behaviour of a few pupils makes some younger pupils feel anxious. As a consequence of leaders' higher expectations of behaviour, the number of fixed-term exclusions has risen slightly, and the overall rate of referral for behaviour incidents remains higher than leaders would like to see. Nevertheless, there is now greater scrutiny of behaviour information and leaders have taken effective action in response to their analysis. For example, a focus on good punctuality has resulted in levels of pupil lateness falling by half compared with the previous year.

Pupils say they feel safe in the academy and would know what to do if anything worried them. They feel confident in talking to adults about any concerns they might have. Although the academy is now taking more robust action to promote better attendance, improvements are happening only slowly. A more coordinated approach to tackling persistent absence, including working directly with pupils' families, is having a positive impact on levels of persistent absence, although, overall, these too remain too high.

## **External support**

The Cabot Learning Federation continues to provide effective support for improvement at the academy, examples of which are detailed in this monitoring inspection report. The focus of this support has been on providing a range of 'inputs' into leadership and teaching, as well as key areas of focus, such as the quality of pupils' writing. The Federation also commissioned the reviews of the pupil premium and of governance, completed following the previous monitoring inspection, which have supported improvements in both of these aspects.

The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan are now both fit for purpose, having had important weaknesses at the previous monitoring inspection. In particular, the academy improvement plan is concise and focused on the key priorities for improvement. A series of regular milestones for checking on the rate of improvement of the academy have been established.

Following this inspection, the following priority for improvement must be added to the academy plan:

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are fully secure by:
  - making sure the single central record of staff recruitment checks is complete and fully accurate, including by ensuring a rigorous process of regular checks and oversight that includes governors
  - ensuring, as soon as possible, that all staff have completed child protection training, and that they are working to policies and procedures as laid out in the academy safeguarding and child protection policies, once these are finalised
  - rapidly improving the quality of the academy's work to report, record and escalate concerns about pupils who might be at risk, including by sharing information with appropriate external agencies
  - ensuring the academy website is fully compliant, including by making sure an appropriate range of policy documentation, including policies for safeguarding and child protection, are available on the academy website.