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29 March 2016

Jon Angell  
Principal  
The City Academy Bristol  
Russell Town Avenue  
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Dear Mr Angell

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

Following my visit with Carol Hannaford and Jacqueline Goodall, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 March 2016, 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 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

Having considered all the evidence, I recommend that the school may seek to appoint no more than two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection in any subject except science.

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 Regional Schools Commissioner, 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.

Following the second monitoring inspection, the following priority for improvement was added to the existing areas for improvement:

- 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.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9-10 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, inspectors met with the Principal and with other members of the school's leadership team. The lead inspector met with the chair of the interim academy board, and with representatives from the Cabot Learning Federation. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils from all year groups and talked with other pupils, at various times, in lessons and around the school. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in various lessons, where they also looked at examples of pupils' work. All visits to lessons were made alongside leaders and managers from the school. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including records of the checks on teaching and minutes 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 information about pupils' progress and attainment.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the Secretary of State has approved the Cabot Learning Federation as the new sponsor for the school. This will take effect from 1 June 2016. In addition, you have been successfully appointed as the substantive Principal of the school. Three teachers have left the school and a new member with expertise in safeguarding has joined the interim academy board.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

As a result of better teaching, pupils are making up for underachievement in the past. This is particularly true in English and mathematics. Pupils say that teaching is strongest in these subjects and that they feel more confident they will be successful. Pupils' writing and presentation is improving too, although some pupils' work is still untidy and incomplete. Teachers regularly provide helpful feedback, particularly about how pupils can improve the quality and accuracy of their work. In mathematics, there is a strong focus on all pupils mastering important concepts and ideas, particularly in Years 7 and 8. However, across the school, pupils say that more of their work could be challenging and 'lessons more interesting'. Although there are signs of improvement, weaker teaching means that pupils are not yet making faster progress in all their subjects, particularly in science.

Improvements are also taking place for different groups of pupils, including for disadvantaged pupils. The school provides good support for pupils from other countries who are learning English. In particular, those pupils who arrive with very weak language skills are helped to integrate quickly through a focus on developing both their English and their understanding of British culture, traditions, community and values. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are usually helped to

make progress in lessons, although at social times and between lessons, some of these pupils feel anxious and worried when corridors are busy and sometimes noisy.

Achievement is also rising in the sixth form, although improvements are taking place more quickly in some subjects than in others. For example, outcomes for students resitting GCSE English or mathematics remain weak, and too many learners do not improve their grade. However, in most cases, where learners are at risk of falling behind, they are identified and supported, and helped to catch up. Teachers provide useful comments on learners' work, including how to reach higher grades. However, learners say that they sometimes need more help in making the best use of their study time outside of lessons. Leaders in the sixth form are aware that teaching also needs to prepare learners to work more effectively in their own time.

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

The overall quality of teaching is improving. Pupils trust their teachers and usually work well with them and with each other. Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on a consistent approach to how teachers mark and review pupils' work. This is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and their attitudes to their learning. For pupils in Key Stage 4, teaching is effective in helping them to understand the skills, knowledge and understanding they will need to be successful in their GCSE examinations. The reliability of information about pupils' progress and attainment has been greatly improved, particularly in English.

Pupils learn best where teaching expects them to try hard, push themselves and produce their best work. However, pupils say that some teaching concentrates on 'getting things done', instead of making sure learning is challenging enough: 'Sometimes you have to wait for harder work.' This means that some pupils reach lower standards than they might, particularly the most able. Teaching in science is not strong enough to enable the brightest pupils to reach the highest grades.

In the sixth form, more teaching is helping to develop learners' thinking and reasoning. However, some learners need more support in getting their ideas down effectively on paper. A few learners are worried about changes of teacher and clashes on their timetable. Sixth-form leaders are working hard to minimise the impact of these changes.

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

Pupils say that behaviour and conduct around the school continues to improve. However, they also say that behaviour in some lessons is still not as good as it could be. The number of 'call-outs' of senior staff to lessons, although reducing, remains higher than leaders would like. Pupils say that one reason for this is that some staff do not follow the school's systems for managing behaviour as consistently as others. Leaders use the information from behaviour incidents to identify where and when

certain subjects or staff need additional help or support. This helps to ensure that pupils feel safe while they are at the school.

There is a good range of activities to support pupils' personal development and welfare. Often, this draws on work going on in the community around the school, including the involvement of pupils in neighbourhood forums. There is a powerful focus on valuing diversity as 'the strength that brings us together'. However, more could be done by some staff to make more effective use of tutorial ('learning family time') at the end of the school day.

Attendance continues to rise, although it remains below the national average overall. Leaders use information about absence and persistent absence to work closely with individuals and families who need help and support. Absences that might indicate safeguarding concerns are quickly identified and rigorously followed up. The attendance of a small number of learners in the sixth form is poor and adversely affects their progress. Leaders in the sixth form are taking action to tackle these concerns, and staff are using expertise from other academies in the Federation to develop their approaches to improving attendance.

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

As a result of concerted actions from leaders and governors, there have been significant improvements to safeguarding. All the aspects that were ineffective at the last monitoring inspection have been swiftly and successfully addressed. In particular, procedures for staff recruitment and suitability checks, the record keeping of referrals of concerns about pupils, and overall levels of oversight are all fully secure. Leaders are now sharing their experience and expertise with other academies across the Federation. There is now a number of strong features of practice at the school, including an appropriate focus on national, regional and local issues. This has included, for example, important training on the specific concerns associated with the possible grooming of young people for criminality. Learners in the sixth form are very clear on how to respond to any disclosures or concerns from younger pupils whom they mentor. This reflects positively on an improved culture of safeguarding across the school.

The leadership of teaching is also improving, and leaders at all levels are now making a stronger contribution, including in the sixth form. Subject teams value the time made available to work together to develop the curriculum and improve teaching. Leaders have recently adapted their approach to checking the quality of teaching and providing feedback to staff. Although this new approach has not been in place long enough to demonstrate significant and sustained impact, staff are positive about the support they receive. Leaders recognise that evidence from these checks must show clearly that pupils' learning is getting better in lessons and over time. Any underperformance in teaching is usually tackled quickly and robustly.

The impact of governance has been significantly strengthened. Members of the interim academy board are now more stringent in their scrutiny of information provided by school leaders than was the case in the past. They make sure they seek external or first-hand verification of what they are told, and they provide rigorous challenge for the rationale and impact of leaders' decisions.

### **External support**

The Cabot Learning Federation continues to provide good-quality support for the school. This is having a positive impact across a number of aspects of the school's work, including strengthening assessment and improving the quality of management information, including data about pupils' attendance. This relationship has also facilitated the sharing of good practice in teaching, leadership and curriculum development between academies in the Federation. Advisers from the Federation also led a review of provision in science and senior managers have worked closely with the interim academy board to strengthen the impact of governance and safeguarding.