

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



9 May 2016

Mrs Nicola Maytum  
Principal  
John Madejski Academy  
125 Hartland Road  
Reading  
Berkshire  
RG2 8AF

Dear Mrs Maytum

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of John Madejski Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 26 and 27 April 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 recent section 5 inspection. Please also pass my thanks on to the pupils, governors and members of staff I met during my visit.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2015.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

#### **The academy's leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The John Madejski Academy Trust, the governors and the school's leaders have created a clear plan for the future of the school. Since January 2016, the principal, supported by senior leaders, has established new procedures and policies that ensure that leadership at all levels is improving in the school. At the time of this first visit, these changes have not yet had a measurable impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. It is essential that, by the time of the second visit, much more rapid improvement is evident.

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

#### **The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.**

However, the action plan would benefit from further review of the details of the milestones and success criteria in the teaching and learning section so that leaders and governors can evaluate progress more sharply.

Having considered all the evidence, I recommend that the academy may seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the John Madejski Academy Trust, the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner, the director of children's services for Reading and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Seamus Murphy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - making sure that all leaders and teachers have high expectations of all pupils
  - focusing relentlessly on improving outcomes for pupils, especially in English, mathematics, science, and design and technology
  - ensuring that leaders at all levels evaluate the impact of their work in a rigorous way, so that they know what is, or is not, working and why
  - ensuring that assessments are accurate and inform staff and pupils reliably about the progress pupils are making
  - ensuring that governors rigorously monitor and evaluate the academy's work and hold senior leaders to account for pupils' achievement
  - evaluating robustly the impact that pupil premium funding is having on pupils' learning.
  
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - raising the expectations of all staff as to what different groups of pupils, including the most and least able, should achieve
  - developing the expertise of teachers so that they can reduce the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding quickly
  - ensuring that pupils regularly receive feedback on their work, which gives them precise guidance on what to do to improve, in line with the academy's policy
  - ensuring that teachers make sharply focused interventions and use skilful questioning to ensure all pupils make rapid progress and catch up quickly.

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

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

It is recommended that the academy does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 April 2016**

### **Evidence**

Two inspectors visited the school for two days. During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, the chair of the governing body, other governors, senior leaders, subject leaders, other teachers and pupils. The trust's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons with the school's senior leaders. In these lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work as well as talking to pupils about their current achievement. Inspectors also looked at a selection of books of pupils who were taking part in work experience during the inspection. A wide range of documentation was also reviewed including the minutes of meetings, achievement information and records of evaluations of teaching. Inspectors also scrutinised the records of the external pupil premium review and the external review of governance.

### **Context**

The trustees of the John Madejski Academy are in advanced discussions with a multi-academy trust. The current principal is leaving at the end of the summer term. There is a new chair of the governing body of the school and a reconstituted governing body. Governors are in the process of recruiting a new principal. The principal has restructured the leadership team and appointed three new senior leaders; governors have supported this by appointing a consultant associate headteacher to secure leadership capacity. There are further changes planned to strengthen leadership of specific subjects. The external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding has been undertaken and this aspect of leadership and management has improved. The review of governance is underway and governors are performing more effectively as a result of this and the restructure they undertook following the previous inspection.

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

Since January 2016, the school's senior leaders have introduced or improved their systems to ensure that the school runs more effectively. However, these changes have not yet had a measurable impact on raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching. The chair of the governing body and the principal are providing good leadership and giving leaders clear direction for the improvement of the school. The principal is well supported by senior leaders and the associate headteacher. However, the team is relatively inexperienced and so many of the changes they have introduced are not yet consistently adopted by teachers across the school.

Since January 2016, leaders have introduced new systems to improve the leadership of teaching. They are now monitoring pupils' progress more robustly and frequently. This is particularly effective with the sixth form and with Year 11, but is not well developed in the other year groups. Leaders have started to improve the way they ensure that assessment is reliable by using external partners, such as local secondary schools, to moderate teachers' judgements of

Year 11 pupils' work. With the support of the associate headteacher and specialist leaders of education, leaders at all levels are now more accurate in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning so that all leaders recognise that there is 'much work to be done'. As a result, all teachers are more aware of what is expected of them, although some are not yet putting the guidance into practice.

Leaders have usefully improved the way they monitor the work of teachers and link this to managing teachers' performance. Although this is at an early stage of development, the system is giving leaders and governors valuable information about strengths and areas for development in the school. This information, alongside leaders' regular monitoring of teaching, has started to be used to support teachers' professional development. There is a targeted programme for staff who need individual support, a coaching programme and more formal approaches so that teaching improves. At this early stage, there is little evidence of significant improvement but it is clear that teachers do appreciate the extent to which improvements are required. Pupils also recognise that teachers have higher expectations of what they can achieve, but are not yet able to say that they are learning better than previously.

Subject leaders are now more confident about improving the quality of teaching in their areas. They feel more supported by leaders and are now held to account more effectively for pupils' progress in Year 11 and in the sixth form. There is some evidence that pupils are making more progress in English than previously, but a lack of leadership in mathematics and staffing instability in science continue to hold back pupils' progress in these subjects. The new leader of design and technology has improved provision for the current Year 11 pupils, who have completed coursework at a very high level. Subject leaders are very clear about the standards that they are expected to meet and, where there is capacity and stability, there is evidence that leaders are beginning to make a difference to pupils' progress. However, in some subjects, leaders have not yet established rigorous systems to check that all staff are following school expectations.

Senior leaders who have responsibility for the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils have adopted the recommendations from the review. As a result, there is now a wide range of strategies in place to support the achievement of these pupils. Many of these pupils have additional support before or after school, although there is not yet sufficient evidence of the impact of this intervention on the progress of these pupils. In January, leaders commissioned external support to review the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Consequently, the special educational needs coordinator introduced a wider range of interventions for these pupils and the school has employed more additional adults to further support their learning. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work on the learning of pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

Since January, governors have acted with appropriate speed and urgency to review the way they work as well as seek external support for the school. The chair has acted expeditiously in holding discussions with multi-academy trusts to ensure that the school receives support quickly. Governors have also taken

significant steps to improve the way they hold school leaders to account for improvement. They have established a new committee to review the progress leaders are making and governors are now more sceptical and robust in their approach to challenging leaders. However, governors still focus too much on monitoring actions rather than evaluating their impact. A good example of this is where governors are now much more knowledgeable about how the school is using pupil premium funding but not sufficiently evaluating the impact of this funding on pupils' progress. The governor review has started and is providing useful guidance to governors to improve the way they work.

By the time of the next visit, senior leaders must ensure that:

- leadership is strengthened in mathematics so that the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make improve rapidly
- the school improvement plan has more sharply defined milestones and success criteria so that leaders and governors can evaluate the progress made more effectively
- subject leaders more robustly check that all teachers are following school procedures
- subject leaders have an accurate overview of the progress of pupils in Years 7 to 10, especially those who have special education needs or disability or are in receipt of the pupil premium, so that they can ensure these pupils catch up.

By the time of the next visit, governors must:

- complete the review of governance so that they are evaluating the impact of leaders more effectively
- successfully commission external support to address the continued weaknesses in subject leadership.

Leaders have effective systems in place to keep children safe. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory guidance and are completely up to date. Pupils report that they feel safe and well cared for. They behave well in lessons and when they move around the school.

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

The quality of teaching was judged to be inadequate in the inspection in November 2015. The school's leaders judge that much teaching still requires improvement or remains inadequate. This is especially the case in mathematics and science, where there are ongoing gaps in staffing. Leaders are very committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The support for newly qualified teachers is very effective, as a result of a well-developed programme and strong support from leaders.

Leaders have introduced a number of initiatives to support teachers to improve their practice. The most significant of these is a new approach to assessment, but this is not yet fully implemented and well used by all staff. There is also targeted support for staff, including coaching and sharing the pockets of best practice to improve teaching, learning and assessment. There is some initial work on developing new approaches to planning for pupils with different starting points but this is not yet fully implemented. In Year 11 and in the sixth form, teachers are more confident in challenging the most-able pupils, but this is not the case throughout the school. There is little evidence that teaching is helping pupils catch up rapidly, as those who receive extra support are benefiting from additional intervention outside of lessons.

Overall, leaders demonstrate a concerted drive to improve teaching but there is not yet evidence of much impact of this in classrooms. Leaders admit that the current approach is under-developed as good ideas are not always translated into practice. In addition, leaders are not clear enough about some of the milestones and the success criteria for improving teaching in the school improvement plan; as a result, they are not focused on making sure key priorities are addressed effectively before moving on to the next one.

By the time of the second monitoring visit, senior and subject leaders must ensure that:

- all teachers set higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able
- ensure that teaching takes account of what teachers know about pupils' current progress
- all teachers use the school's assessment policy to help pupils improve their work
- strategies to help pupils catch up quickly are used consistently by all teachers.

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

Pupils are generally smart and polite and conduct themselves well. They are considerate and happy to discuss their views with adults. They say behaviour is improving in the school since the previous inspection. In assembly, they listened attentively and remained focused. They move calmly around the site and arrive to lessons on time. Even when teaching is not stimulating they pay attention and behave appropriately. However, pupils have not been sufficiently challenged about their learning in the past. They lack confidence in talking about their work and what they need to do to improve it. As a result, they rarely respond to the feedback in their books or take much pride in the presentation of their work.

Senior leaders recognise that they need to develop the pupils' skills and attitudes so that pupils push themselves to achieve more. There is some useful work on addressing this but there is little evidence of its impact beyond Year 11 and the

sixth form. Leaders also understand that the current levels of attendance are also preventing some pupils achieving as much as they should. There is an increased rigour and focus on attendance that is beginning to have an impact, with more pupils attending regularly.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The November 2015 inspection judged that outcomes for pupils were inadequate. An analysis of Year 11 assessment information in English shows that more pupils than previously are making better progress, with further evidence that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others is narrowing. Observations in English confirm that pupils are being challenged more effectively. Similarly, from observations of learning in the sixth form, more pupils are making the progress that is expected of them as a result of well-targeted teaching.

However, observations of learning in mathematics and science during this visit indicate that pupils currently in key stages 3 and 4 are not attaining at a high enough standard. At the most recent assessment point, the most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils are performing well below what is expected. Overall, achievement in these subjects is low and there is insufficient challenge for the most able or adroitly targeted support for those falling behind. Therefore, pupils are not developing the skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve well.

Pupils' progress in Year 11 and the sixth form is now being monitored more robustly. Therefore, senior leaders are able to identify those pupils at risk of underachieving and put in place the right support to help them catch up. This is a relatively recent development and, although working well for the year groups taking exams, it has not been developed further. In addition, leaders do not yet have a sufficiently well-developed understanding of the performance of pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Consequently, leaders are unable to accurately assess the performance of pupils in Years 7 to 10 and put in place appropriate support for those who are falling behind.

Many pupils enter the school at the start of Year 7 with lower than average skills in reading, writing, speaking and mathematics. Leaders recognise that addressing this is an urgent priority and have usefully raised teachers' awareness of this with additional training. Consequently, there is some evidence that pupils are developing these skills but it is not widespread or consistently applied across the school.

### **External support**

There has been a lack of urgency by both the trust and the local authority in commissioning external support. In the first instance, the principal commissioned useful external support from the local authority, local secondary schools and the Science Learning Centre. This initial support helped the school review the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, increase the accuracy of assessment in science and develop the capacity of subject leaders. More recently the chair of the governing body also commissioned additional support for

senior leaders by appointing an associate headteacher, who is beginning to have an impact on the leadership capacity in the school. However there remains an urgent need to provide specific support, particularly in mathematics, as well as to secure more long-term support for the school.