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2 May 2013

Mrs Angela Briggs  
Principal  
Melior Community Academy  
Chandos Road  
Scunthorpe  
Lincolnshire  
DN17 1HA

Dear Mrs Briggs

**No formal designation monitoring inspection of Melior Community Academy**

Following my visit with Jan Bennett Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on 30 April and 1 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

**Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, senior and learning leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body together with the Chair of the Progress and Standards Committee and representatives of the sponsors, Schools Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA). Groups of students were spoken to at social times.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all students.

## **Context**

Melior Community Academy opened in January 2013. It provides education for students aged 11 to 16 and is smaller than most secondary schools nationally. Forty-two per cent of the students, which is significantly higher than that seen nationally, are supported by the pupil premium, (additional government funding for children in local authority care, students known to be eligible for free school meals and students whose parents are serving in the armed forces). An above average proportion of students are supported at school action and at school action plus. Since the academy opened there has been staffing changes, particularly at senior level and there are vacancies yet to be filled at all levels with some lessons taught by teachers whose contracts are temporary.

During the monitoring inspection all Year 10 students were absent undertaking work experience activities.

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

The academy has a wealth of data about students' capabilities and until recently this information was not being used well enough by teachers when they plan lessons. Inspectors saw that there has been an improvement in the way teachers use this information. The quality of teaching has also improved; combined together, these factors contribute significantly to the increase in the proportion of students working at or above the levels expected for their age.

Lesson observations and academy data show that the pace of improvement is not only in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and for students in Year 11, but is evident throughout the academy and within other subjects. Regular monitoring of students' progress enables leaders to assign students to appropriate intervention programmes which begin in Year 7 through the 'I strategy', (identification, intervention, impact). This strategy involves parents so that they are aware of what is being done to help their child. Consequently, when teaching is strong the pace of improvement is evident for all groups of students, including those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. However, this is not always apparent particularly when teaching is weak and where students do similar work in lessons.

Students supported by the government's pupil premium funding are also improving their progress both in the classroom and their attitudes to learning. This is because the additional funding is being used well to provide additional external consultant support for teachers, to purchase books chosen to involve and interest students and to employ additional support staff to work with disaffected students particularly.

Since the academy opened, leaders can demonstrate that improvements are evident and the gap between different groups and the national average is reducing, albeit

less well in a few areas. Staff give greater emphasis toward developing students' literacy rather than their numeracy skills in lessons. Consequently, improving these important skills is patchy.

### **The quality of teaching**

Senior leaders are relentless in their drive to improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy. Where teaching is strongest, the pace of learning is brisk, students work collaboratively to investigate and discover through 'hands-on' tasks, which is done enthusiastically. Books are marked regularly and students are given time to respond to the teachers' comments and understand where they have gone wrong. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of the levels at which the students are working and the targets they should reach. Again, in the stronger lessons this information is used effectively to ensure that all groups receive work at the right level of challenge. Teachers are confident to 'take risks' and plan imaginative, creative lessons. However, these strong features are not securely embedded in every class; in weaker lessons, teachers lack confidence and therefore students' progress is uneven.

Students are aware of their end of year targets and in some subjects they understand how to get there, however, this is not established throughout the academy. Too often teachers encourage students to check they have completed a task rather than reviewing what they have learnt and how this contributes to improving their progress. Even in the strongest lessons, inspectors were in agreement with senior leaders that the ends of lessons are underused. Too often the bell rings and students move to their next lesson before reviewing what they have learned.

Lesson plans indicate how lessons will develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Often tenuous links are made but inspectors saw strong evidence of where these aspects are developed positively, particularly in science and history.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour around the academy is mainly orderly and calm which contributes to students feeling safe. They understand how to keep themselves safe and avoid threats posed by using technology inappropriately. Students are generally polite and respectful of each other and adults and they move purposefully to and between lessons. Students have positive attitudes to learning in those lessons where teaching is strong. During these lessons, students participate well showing good teamwork skills and are able to make their own decisions about which differentiated task they will undertake. Where teaching fails to engage students, they lose focus on learning and low-level chatter is apparent. In general students enjoy life at the academy and there are no particular problems with attendance or persistent absenteeism. The academy's close link with specific charities, The Teenage Cancer Trust and Help for

Heroes is well understood by students who give generously to support these particular causes.

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

The Principal provides strong leadership and communicates high aspirations and clear aims for the academy very effectively. She is very well supported by governors. Since the academy opened, the senior team has been re-structured. There is a good blend of expertise and members of the team are driving improvements quickly and enthusiastically. During the monitoring inspection, senior and learning leaders demonstrated well their growing capacity to continue raising students' standards of attainment.

The members of the governing body have a very clear view of the quality of provision within the academy because they work very closely with senior leaders and the sponsors. Access to key information about students' progress enables them to question leaders rigorously because they do not rely solely on what they are told. This enables them to make a very strong contribution to the development of the academy and to support and to challenge effectively when improvements are needed.

Changing the system for recording and monitoring the progress made by students has been a key driver in ensuring that staff have access to the system and understand how to use it properly. After the first term of using this system, leaders and governors can identify which groups of students are achieving well and which are underachieving. The comprehensive self-evaluation document completed by learning leaders enables them to understand about the quality of teaching, students' progress and to pinpoint precisely the training needs of the staff in their departments. Accountability extends to all because staff identify their own training needs and senior leaders ensure that these are met either by engaging external consultants or by using their own staff. Current performance management targets lack sharpness, but leaders are able to identify where improvements are evident because of the systematic approach to improving the overall quality of teaching.

### **External support**

The sponsors provided effective support to senior leaders during the re-structuring by adding additional personnel before the appointment of the vice-principal. They continue to facilitate links with other academies within the group so that visits can be arranged and practice observed. Additional technical, financial and legal support has been provided. In addition to this help, senior leaders have the freedom to commission external consultants from a range of sources to support teachers and departments. Learning Leaders meet with other heads of department throughout the local authority and benefit from discussions and sharing ideas. Leaders have used the support from the sponsors well to deal with the most urgent issues as quickly as

possible. Many staff welcome and benefit from this support, however, not all issues have been resolved.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**