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27 February 2017

Mr M Farmer  
Headteacher  
Queen Elizabeth Humanities College  
Ashfields  
Bromyard  
Herefordshire  
HR7 4QS

Dear Mr Farmer

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Queen Elizabeth Humanities College**

Following my visit to your school on 8–9 February 2017, 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 that 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 that took place in October 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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 am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Herefordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2015.**

- Urgently increase the impact of leadership and management at all levels to secure rapid and sustained improvements in pupil outcomes by:
  - ensuring that governors receive training, so that they have the necessary skills to challenge leaders and hold them to account for the performance of the school
  - setting clear targets in improvement planning, so that the success of leaders' actions can be measured in terms of their impact on outcomes for pupils
  - continuing to review and refine the deployment and monitoring of pupil premium funding, so that it is used effectively to close the gaps between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and others
  - monitoring rigorously the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, including that of different groups of pupils in all year groups, so that underachievement is identified and arrested swiftly
  - strengthening the skills and abilities of middle leaders in monitoring pupils' progress in their areas and in checking the work of their teams
  - ensuring that information on pupils' attainment and progress is accurate in all subjects
  - making sure that all staff have read and are fully conversant with statutory guidance to keep children safe
  - drawing on leadership support from good and outstanding schools in order to build leadership capacity.
  
- Improve teaching so that the progress of all pupils, and all groups of pupils, continues to accelerate by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
  - planning lessons and setting activities that take into account the prior knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils and enthuse them to do well
  - ensuring that all teachers have the confidence and skills to respond to how well pupils are learning and adapt their lessons accordingly
  - ensuring that pupils act on teachers' feedback to improve their learning and work
  - sharing best practice in the school so that all teaching matches that of the best.

■ Urgently improve pupils' outcomes by:

- raising the achievement of all pupils and groups of pupils, including that of disadvantaged pupils and the most able
- ensuring that pupils achieve well in all subjects, and by reducing gaps in pupils' attainment and progress between subjects.

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

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

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 8 February to 9 February 2017**

### **Evidence**

I held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders, including those who are responsible for safeguarding. I also met with five members of the governing body, including the chair, and an external consultant. I met with some recently qualified teachers and spoke to teachers when feeding back after observing their lessons. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered.

I observed pupils' learning in 10 lessons across a range of subjects in key stages 3 and 4. I was accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team for most of these observations. I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. I observed behaviour in lessons and during social times.

I evaluated a range of documents, including school and governor action plans, the school's analysis of current pupils' progress, records about attendance and behaviour and information about the quality of teaching.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection in November 2016, there has been stability in staffing. One teacher joined the staff at the start of the term. You have identified a contingency for a planned leave of absence later this year. The secondment you made to the senior leadership team continues. The governing body's Evidence Review Committee (ERC) continues to review and evaluate the progress the school is making and provide an executive summary to all governors.

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

You and your leaders continue to take substantial and effective action to deal with the weaknesses identified in October 2015. As aspects of the school improve, you refocus staff on new priorities so that the pace of improvement continues. Leaders maintain an open culture, which benefits the quality of provision at the school. As staff are increasingly able to demonstrate the positive impact of their actions, you use their expertise more to benefit colleagues.

Continuous development of teachers' skills remains a key priority for leaders. Staff participate in high-quality training. This is informed by ongoing analysis of the quality of teaching and school improvement priorities. Recent training led by members of staff shared examples of best practice at the school. It raised colleagues' awareness of a wide range of teaching and learning strategies and their impact on pupils. Leaders ensure that staff also gain from expertise in other

schools. Teachers benefited from a recent visit to another school to investigate aspects of teaching and leadership. Teachers' self-reflection of this experience has resulted in tangible improvements in practice, for example in planning ways to develop pupils' skills in response to qualification changes.

Leaders ensure that there is a clear and well-planned programme of support for newly qualified teachers. Sessions respond to the development needs and skills and experience of new colleagues. As a result, newly qualified teachers are well supported and given the opportunity to successfully complete the induction process at the start of their careers.

Middle leaders' skills and abilities continue to develop. They are increasingly playing a part in collecting objective evidence about the quality of teaching and learning. They do this through lesson observations, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. As a result, they are more confident in the judgements they make about the quality of teaching and learning within their teams. Although middle leaders continue to discuss their judgements with senior leaders before feeding back to colleagues, they are becoming increasingly autonomous in this regard. The faculty review process has strengthened middle leaders' skills of self-evaluation. However, they are less clear about how this process contributes to overall school self-evaluation and strategic planning.

The ERC continues to meet regularly to monitor the progress leaders make in response to the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in October 2015. They use their expertise and knowledge of the school to ask questions that support and challenge leaders. Governors regularly review pupils' progress and meet with faculty leaders to discuss the outcomes of recent faculty reviews. This contributes to increased accountability for middle leaders and the development of their skills in self-evaluation and strategic planning.

Governors have carefully considered the recommendations for further development made as part of an external review of their work. Prompt and effective actions have been taken following the creation of a plan in response to these recommendations. The author of the review regularly receives minutes of the governing body's meetings and so is able to monitor their progress. As a result of the actions they are taking, governors' skills and experience continue to develop, further strengthening this aspect of leadership at the school. Two governors have recently been appointed as vice-chairs to ensure that recent improvements in the governing body's effectiveness are sustainable in the future.

Leaders and governors continue to monitor the effectiveness of strategies used to support disadvantaged pupils. The clear identification of learning and pastoral barriers informs the judicious use of additional funding to address the needs of individual pupils. Strategies include using learning mentors, personalisation of the curriculum and support provided by external agencies. Leaders report clearly that the impact of additional funding now means that disadvantaged pupils make similar

rates of progress as other pupils in the school. However, statements are less clear about other ways in which those leaders' work impacts positively on these pupils.

Leaders responsible for ensuring that safeguarding is effective sustain a culture of its importance throughout the school. Recent training ensures that staff remain abreast of updates in legislation and guidance. Leaders ensure that the training received is effective and staff are fully conversant with their responsibilities. They check understanding of key information and provide additional guidance if required.

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

It is evident that the strong focus on improving teaching and learning through teacher development opportunities is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning at the school. In addition to the training all staff receive, there is also targeted support for individual staff if required.

Teachers have clear expectations of what pupils can achieve, and effectively plan their lessons to provide challenge and support for pupils. Lessons often provide work of a higher level of challenge or opportunities to move on to more demanding work when pupils are ready to do so. Also, support and additional resources are available for pupils who require them. As a result, pupils are engaged with tasks that take into account their starting points and prior knowledge. Pupils respond positively to work that meets their learning needs, and a studious working environment exists in classrooms. Occasionally, work is not pitched at the right level, or pupils are given too long to complete a particular task. This results in pupils making less progress and their attention wandering from their learning.

Teachers use questioning with great effect to challenge and support pupils. Questions are pitched at the right level for pupils to develop more detail in their responses, think about things in greater depth or tackle misconceptions. Pupils receive a wealth of information about their work, including responses from teachers in lessons and following self-assessment activities. Teachers are increasingly providing pupils with effective opportunities to make high-quality responses to the feedback they receive and to improve their work.

Teachers use a wide variety of ways to judge how well pupils are doing during a lesson. They mostly use this information well to make decisions about which direction to take the lesson. On a few occasions, teachers are less responsive to how well pupils are learning and either interrupt their focus or miss the chance to extend learning opportunities.

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

Pupils continue to be respectful and considerate of one another and adults at the school. Pupils dress smartly, and any deviations from expectations for how the school's uniform should be worn are dealt with appropriately. Pupils respect the

school environment and keep it clean and tidy. School records show that inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, is very rare but dealt with effectively when it does occur. Detailed records of any such incidents are kept. The proportion of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period of time is very low, and exclusion is used as a last resort. Very occasionally in lessons, when pupils are not being sufficiently challenged or moved quickly enough, they can become disengaged or distracted from their learning.

The school's rewards system is successfully engaging and motivating pupils. They receive house points for good work or positive conduct. Pupils use these to select from a range of rewards, ranging from stationery items to savings on prom tickets. The rewards system maintains a high profile in school because pupils regularly update the range of rewards on offer to reflect their interests.

Rates of attendance are currently just below the national average. Most pupils attend school very regularly, but a few key stage 4 pupils, who are persistently absent from school, negatively impact overall attendance rates. Leaders have responded by targeting pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern sooner, so that earlier support can be put in place.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Leaders ensure the reliability and validity of the assessment information they collect through careful analysis and a wide variety of checks with other sources of information. Senior leaders give full attention to the information and guidance available about changes in the way some subjects will be assessed this year. Middle leaders and teachers have a high awareness of these changes and use the information they have well to forecast pupils' performance.

The most recent information that leaders have collected and analysed about progress indicates that disadvantaged pupils in all year groups continue to make similar rates of overall progress as their peers. However, there are differences in some subjects. In Year 11, boys' overall progress is comparable to that of girls. However, some inconsistencies in rates of progress remain between boys and girls in some subjects and also for younger pupils. High-prior-attaining younger pupils are currently making increased rates of progress compared to older pupils at the school.

Leaders' analysis of progress effectively informs which pupils, particularly those in Year 11, will benefit from additional support in order to achieve their examination grade targets. Additionally, detailed analysis of pupils' responses to examination questions is used by teachers to plan which topics or skills to prioritise during lessons. Revisiting prior learning in this way is proving successful in supporting pupils preparing for examinations in the summer.

Information about pupils who arrive at the school with low literacy skills is used

well. Effective additional interventions benefit these pupils. They are better able to access other aspects of the curriculum as a result of the additional support they receive.

### **External support**

Two national leaders of education (NLEs) continue to provide high-quality external support for the school. This support remains effective in providing appropriate challenge and external validation of judgements that leaders and governors make about the quality of teaching and the overall effectiveness of the school, which are improving as a result. Both NLEs were instrumental in brokering some of the opportunities for teaching staff to spend time in other schools this term as part of their professional development.