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29 September 2011

Mrs Tracy Luke
Executive Principal
Marsh Academy
Station Road
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Dear Mrs Luke

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with additional focus on behaviour:
monitoring inspection of Marsh Academy**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy with David Lewis, additional inspector, on 28 September 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please thank your staff and students for talking to us about their work and for helping with the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, staff turnover has reduced and the academy is preparing to move in to purpose-built accommodation on the same site in the new year. A sixth-form centre that provides a dedicated social and work area for sixth form students has been opened opposite the main academy.

As a result of the inspection on 16–17 June 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the academy has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement. The effectiveness of the school in improving pupils' behaviour is satisfactory.

Outcomes for students have continued to improve and unvalidated data shows that, in 2011, 47% of students gained five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above including both mathematics and English. The academy's own tracking data and observation of lessons and students' work show that an increasing proportion of students are making satisfactory or better progress towards their challenging targets.

In most lessons, teachers use assessment information well to ensure tasks and activities are pitched at the right level for students' different capabilities. Learning

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objectives are shared with the students but these are not always accompanied by success criteria that students can use to gauge their own progress. Development of literacy skills is explicit in most lessons. Teachers generally provide a good range of resources and materials to meet students' literacy needs but a more structured approach is needed in some classes to help lower-ability students with their writing. The best lessons provide students with good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through working with a partner. Good examples were seen where teachers linked activities to their own or students' experiences but opportunities were sometimes missed to provide practical activities and to engage students more actively in their learning. Reduced staff turnover has contributed to greater continuity for students, and good productive relationships between staff and students were evident in most classes.

The senior leadership team has been enlarged to improve capacity. Systematic monitoring of teaching and learning and other aspects of the academy's work has identified strengths and areas for development. Any evident weaknesses in teaching are being addressed through an appropriate balance of challenge and support. The academy can identify improvements that have resulted from coaching and professional development opportunities provided for staff.

A rigorous tracking system ensures that progress of sixth form students is closely monitored. Analysis of assessment data and regular student reviews give the academy an accurate view of student performance and confirm accelerated rates of progress. Sixth form students feel that they are held to account. They say that they are supported well and get the advice and guidance that they need to make informed choices about their futures. Each sixth form student has a personal tutor who supports their academic and personal development. Students are consulted about the subjects they want to study and the curriculum is becoming increasingly responsive to their needs and aspirations. An academic mentoring scheme has been introduced to support students who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving. Attendance is closely monitored and current attendance in the sixth form is high.

A new behaviour policy has been introduced and staff have been trained in its implementation. The revised rewards scheme aims to reward students for sustained good behaviour, attendance and achievement. A reward concert was being held during the inspection to celebrate student achievement. Record keeping is now more consistent and senior leaders are better informed about behaviour issues and student achievements. There has been a significant reduction in permanent exclusions and there are higher expectations of how students should behave. Behaviour in lessons and around the academy has improved and is often good. A 'behaviour for learning' programme has been introduced but this is not fully embedded. It is not clear that teachers have a common understanding of the thresholds that trigger the different stages of the behaviour management process and, consequently, management of behaviour at classroom level is inconsistent.

The academy is very inclusive and there is a significant minority of students who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. These students are generally supported well but, very occasionally, the behaviour of a few has an adverse impact on their own and others' learning.

The academy's sponsors and other partners have supported the academy in the implementation of its improvement plan. The governing body has monitored the progress made in addressing the areas for improvement and provided a useful balance of challenge and support.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your academy. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Increase the proportion of good teaching throughout the academy, including the sixth form, by:
 - making learning expectations clear and ensuring that the range of tasks stretch students of all abilities
 - providing more opportunities for literacy development in lessons
 - improving students' engagement by making activities more practical and grounded in real-world examples
 - supporting continuity of learning by taking steps to minimise changes of teacher.

- Improve outcomes and provision in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that all students make at least satisfactory progress from their starting points
 - strengthening tutorial systems and the individual guidance that students receive so that they are all taking the right courses and those who are struggling receive timely and well-targeted support.

- Improve behaviour, particularly in lessons, by:
 - ensuring greater consistency in how staff manage behaviour
 - reviewing the systems for promoting positive behaviour
 - developing students' positive attitudes towards learning and providing them with skills to enable them to be better equipped to make the most of their time in lessons.