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14 November 2011

Mr G Hutchence  
Principal  
The East Manchester Academy  
60 Grey Mare Lane  
Beswick  
Manchester  
M11 3DS

Dear Mr Hutchence

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection to The East Manchester Academy**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Angela Milner HMI to your academy on 10 and 11 November 2011, 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 first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, including visits to 22 lessons. They scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other members of the leadership team, the Chair of the Trust, members of the governing body, staff and students.

### **Context**

The East Manchester Academy opened as a brand new purpose-built academy in September 2010 for students in Year 7. The standard admission number is 180 and the academy is oversubscribed with 374 students currently in Years 7 and 8. Over 61% of students are of White British backgrounds. The main heritages that comprise a further 25% of the student population include other white or mixed backgrounds, as well as those of Black African, Chinese, or Caribbean heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is around 14%, although few are at the early stages of learning English. Over half of all students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is much higher than the national average. Over a third of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, of these nine have a statement of special needs.

Staffing levels are increasing accordingly as the academy grows. Of the twelve new teachers appointed in September 2011, nine are newly-qualified, accounting for over one third of all teachers. Plans are in place for future recruitment as the number of students on roll rises

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

each year and the first intake will reach Key Stage 4 in September 2013. Following some early changes shortly after its first term, current staffing at the academy is stable. The academy's lead sponsors are Laing O'Rourke and Lend Lease. Its co-sponsors are The Manchester College and Manchester City Council. The academy has a specialism in the built environment.

## **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

Students join the academy from over 30 different primary schools. For a significant proportion of students, their attainment on entry is below expected levels in both English and mathematics. Boys outnumber girls, though not significantly, and they generally enter with lower attainment in English than that of the girls. The academy is working successfully to raise students' attainment by increasing the rate at which they are making progress in lessons and over time. For example, the academy's assessment data indicate that the first cohort of students, now in Year 8, made good progress overall in mathematics, English and science during Year 7. Rates of progress were particularly good in English during last year. A factor contributing to this is the successful initiative to improve students' interest and skills in reading, enabling significant gains in the reading ages of many students. The first round of assessments for the current Year 7 shows that they too are making good overall progress so far. Observations of students' work during lessons across both year groups, and most often in Year 8, support this view. Students' progress is most rapid when the quality of teaching and students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good or outstanding.

Students are proud of the academy and enjoy their learning. They feel safe and well supported, and as a result are growing in confidence and contributing more of their own thoughts and ideas to lessons and other activities. Well planned interventions and additional support by teaching assistants are helping to improve the rate of progress made by students at risk of underachievement. More able students are responding well to the additional challenges provided for them. All groups of students feel fully included in all that the academy has to offer, and feel valued as individuals with different needs. The academy monitors their personal as well as academic progress, and students understand the importance of developing good workplace skills for their future. The academy is keen to increase opportunities for students to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills across subjects. There are occasions when students' learning behaviours are less positive in ensuring that they are fully engaged and working to full capacity. This occurs when teaching input dominates the lesson or provides too much help and guidance that students are happy to accept, rather than pushing them to think more for themselves and work more independently. The quality of students' writing is variable, as some lack pride in their work or the determination to complete set tasks to a good standard across subjects other than English.

Students particularly enjoy a wide range of sport and practical subjects and are proud that the academy has recently been recognised in an award for 'Outstanding Contribution to Physical Education and School Sport in Manchester'.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Students are well behaved, polite and helpful and respond well to the academy's high expectations, vision and values. This, along with a strong focus on safety and students' good understanding of safe practices, contributes to the academy's calm and purposeful atmosphere. Most students attend regularly, arrive punctually to lessons and have quickly developed a strong sense of community that is supporting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They understand the academy's behaviour policies and appreciate the rewards systems. On the few occasions that behaviour is satisfactory rather than good or better, this is related to the quality of teaching. Movement around the building is orderly, supported by staff supervision and by students themselves, in the role of prefects. Relationships between staff and students are very positive and contribute to the enjoyment of learning. The student voice is valued and students know that their views matter. The student council represents these views well and takes its responsibilities seriously. Students on the council have been involved in meeting and questioning members of the governing body, and in interviewing new teachers.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

In three quarters of the lessons seen on this monitoring inspection teaching was good or better, including three where it was outstanding. Common strengths include teachers' strong subject knowledge, their use of good quality resources, high expectations and detailed planning of interesting, well structured lessons that motivate students. In the main, this is leading to consistently good learning and progress. Teaching assistants work effectively to offer an appropriate balance of challenge and support for those students who have particular learning or behavioural needs so that they make similar progress to their peers. In lessons where learning is less than good, teachers are not making the best use of information about students' prior attainment to ensure that all ability groups are given tasks that fully meet their needs. This use of assessment to support learning is also more successful when the teacher uses good questioning skills aimed at particular groups or individuals and related to their targets for improvement. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that students think more deeply and expand upon their answers to demonstrate their understanding or reveal any misconceptions that can be remedied. They provide opportunities for students to discuss their ideas and assess their own and each others' work. In these lessons, students know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, because the teacher makes good use of subject level descriptors. Where teachers' marking is particularly effective, this also ensures that students have precise information about how to improve, although this is not yet consistent across subjects. Leaders have identified a need to re-evaluate the organisation of some teaching groups with regard to mixed ability or setting arrangements in order to maximise learning. This is being planned for next term, the third in the academy's five-term year.

There are particular strengths in the academy's curriculum, not least of which is the extensive range of enrichment opportunities that build effectively on links with partnerships in the local community and on the academy's specialism in the built environment. These

include collaboration with the academy's main sponsors and a number of external providers such as The Manchester College, Royal Exchange Theatre Project, Manchester City Football Club, Sportcity and the on-site Beswick Library. Students experience the Key Stage 3 curriculum through themes that draw on skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. This includes a wide range of arts, technology, sports, music, drama and dance, which also feature largely in the weekly 'Flexible Friday' afternoon activities. There are well-considered plans in place for the introduction of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, offering a range of pathways including a three-year Key Stage 4 option beginning in September 2012.

Students benefit from very good levels of care, guidance and support that demonstrate the academy's commitment to valuing all students and removing barriers to learning, enabling them to make the best of the opportunities it offers.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

The Principal, senior leaders and the governing body articulate an ambitious vision for the academy in which the firm belief that 'success is the only option' is clearly at the forefront. It is testament to their commitment to that vision that an ethos of collaboration and enthusiasm for learning and improving is evident across the whole staff team. Expectations of staff are high and the monitoring of their work is rigorous. The opportunities for professional development and the sharing of best practice are plentiful. Newly qualified teachers have access to good quality mentoring and training activities, with opportunities to learn from and alongside each other as well as more experienced colleagues. Area team leaders are rapidly developing their effective leadership and management skills as they share responsibility for monitoring and evaluating performance in their subject or sector areas. As a result, senior and middle leaders already have robust evidence of the early impact of their work on student outcomes, including on raising attainment. Senior leaders' evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate and used effectively to identify strengths for dissemination or weaknesses to inform targets for improvement. Improvement plans are well-focused on appropriate actions, timescales and clear success criteria by which their success can be measured. Well considered plans are in place for the next phase of the academy's development and the recruitment of staff to match its changing needs. Taking into account how much has been achieved in just over a year, the academy is demonstrating a very strong capacity to improve further.

### **External support**

The academy is making good use of the significant amount of time and expertise provided by members of the Trust, governing body and sponsors. Particular knowledge and skills in business and the built environment are applied to aspects of performance management at senior level and the regular and succinct reporting of progress towards the achievement of targets. The academy also makes good use of the benefits that are available in the form of discounted rates with local sporting venues and facilities.

## **Main Judgements**

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marguerite Murphy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**