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20 January 2012

Mr Jim Wade  
Principal  
The JCB Academy  
Mill Street  
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Dear Mr Wade

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of The JCB Academy**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with David Martin HMI and Gina White HMI to your academy on 18–19 January 2012, 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, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, staff, groups of students and members of the governing body.

### **Context**

The JCB Academy opened in September 2010. The academy is sponsored by JCB and has links with a group of industrial partners. The academy is designated as a University Technical College. All students embark on a diploma in engineering at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, they choose between a higher diploma in engineering or business.

In September 2010, although students were enrolled into Years 10 and 12 none were registered in Years 11 and 13. In 2011, the number of students in the academy doubled with the enrolment of the new cohort. Currently, there are 307 students on roll. The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Approximately 90% of the students are boys. The proportion of students from minority ethnic

groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below average. A higher than average proportion of students is disabled or has special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Approximately half of the staff started working at the academy in August 2011.

### **Pupils' achievement**

Assessment information shows that attainment on entry is broadly average. At Key Stage 4, all groups of students make rapid progress in engineering, business, mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT). Early indicators, such as the proportion of students who passed the GCSE mathematics examination with a grade C or above in November 2011, show that attainment in these subjects exceeds expectations. This is a result of extremely challenging targets and highly effective individual support to ensure that students are well equipped to attain high standards. In the sixth form, assessment information shows that all students are on course to pass their Level 3 engineering diploma. AS-level results for 2011 show that attainment was lower than expected in physics and mathematics. All students currently embark on a GCSE German course. Assessment information shows that attainment in this subject is much lower than expected.

All groups of students are making rapid progress in engineering, business, mathematics, English and ICT. The small proportion of girls is making even more rapid progress than the boys. An impressive feature is the progress made in English by the relatively large group of dyslexic students.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Many of the students report the difficulties they have had in education in the past and how much they appreciate the opportunity to attend this academy. Their motivation and dedication to pursuing qualifications and, ultimately, a career in engineering or business is impressive. Behaviour is generally good, both in lessons and around the academy. The necessity to adopt safe health and safety procedures is well understood by all and adhered to with due rigour. There is a small minority of students whose behaviour can be challenging. However, the academy has developed effective procedures that are ensuring that occasional misbehaviour has a minimal impact on learning. Students report that bullying is very rare and they are confident that they can go to their mentors for help if necessary. Attendance is above average.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

In a short time, the Principal and other academy leaders have successfully established a new teaching team that delivers a majority of lessons that are good or better. Teachers make good use of excellent ICT equipment and other resources such as the outstanding facilities for engineering to support their teaching. There are, however, some inconsistencies in teaching. For example, in lessons that are

good or better, nearly all students are challenged appropriately because teachers have used assessment information to pitch work at the right level for them. In lessons that are satisfactory, this is not done as well. A few students find the work either too easy or too hard. While students benefit from good guidance and individual support, the marking of their work in some subjects varies in quality.

The academy has established effective strategies to ensure that students make rapid progress in some subjects. For example, in the engineering department, students at Key Stage 4 work in houses with a team of adults made up of teachers, learning mentors and learning support assistants. As well as teaching expertise, these teams display a range of technical expertise across the engineering disciplines. This is very effective in ensuring that students pursue engineering challenges successfully, well supported by expert advice and guidance.

Students are well cared for and the pastoral team have successfully and swiftly established procedures to care for, guide and support the minority of students who are disabled and those with special educational needs as well as those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The girls reported to inspectors how much they enjoy attending the academy. They are confident and appreciative of the opportunity to learn engineering where the provision is of such high quality. Among the particularly effective features of provision are the accurate identification of weaknesses in numeracy and literacy skills and the swift and successful interventions that are enabling students to make rapid progress in English and mathematics.

Curriculum pathways are being established for students that may want to embark on apprenticeships after Key Stage 4 or for those that want to pursue university qualifications. One of the academy's strengths is its ability to recognise and redesign aspects of the curriculum or provision swiftly that are not as successful as was expected. For example, the curriculum for modern foreign languages is to alter from September 2012 following accurate analysis of the needs of students. Students in the sixth form benefit from the opportunity to study a broader range of A-levels than are offered at the academy because of the partnership with a local secondary school. In its first year, approximately a quarter of the students dropped out of the sixth form. The academy has taken decisive steps to increase the proportion who stay on. For example, procedures to recruit students for courses, such as AS-level physics and mathematics have improved. Consequently, academy information shows that there is less chance of students failing these courses or dropping out of the sixth form this year.

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

The vision to increase the engineering skills and employability of students is inspirational and the provision is innovative and unique. Leadership from the Principal, senior leaders and the governing body is excellent. In a short space of time, they have established an academy with clear purpose, populated by a highly

motivated body of students and staff. The academy is inclusive. All students, regardless of ability and previous difficulties they may have experienced, benefit from this opportunity to embark on a high-quality technical education. Procedures to check the progress of students are thorough and rigorous. The rapid progress made by students in key subjects and the establishment of high-quality provision in a relatively short time demonstrate that the academy has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

Academy leaders have accurately evaluated the teaching expertise of members of staff, many who have been at the academy for less than a year. Procedures to improve teaching and learning are established and this is contributing to some outstanding lessons. The academy recognises the need to share this best practice more widely so that teachers understand what constitutes outstanding teaching. The effectiveness of middle leadership is variable and dependant on the experience of the staff. Consequently, leaders benefit from training to enable them to be fully effective in holding their teams to account for the quality of teaching and learning.

The governing body has been instrumental in establishing and providing strategic direction for the academy. To this end, it holds leaders to account very effectively for the academy's development. The academy benefits from a governing body that demonstrates extensive experience in industry and engineering as well as education.

### **External support**

The partnerships the academy has with industry are crucial to its success. Integral parts of the engineering curriculum are the eight-week challenges designed with industrial partners. For example, the project that was taking place with Toyota at the time of the inspection. These projects enable students to learn in an environment, enriched by industry experts, using sophisticated resources. As well as the high quality of the learning experiences, students gain a very useful insight into engineering careers.

### **Main Judgements**

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the consistency of teaching by:
  - sharing the best teaching approaches across the academy
  - ensuring that middle leaders are effective in driving improvements to teaching
  - improving the marking of students' work
  - establishing clear expectations of what constitutes outstanding teaching.

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 posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc Paul Pritchard Chair of the Governing Body  
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