

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

Ofsted
T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Serco
Direct T 0121 683 3888
Direct email: inspections@serco.com



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Mr G Batty
Hellesdon High School
187 Middletons Lane
Hellesdon
Norwich
NR6 5SB

Dear Mr Batty

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Hellesdon High School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you and the staff provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the students for their help in finding my way around the school and for the helpful contributions they made when giving their views of improvements made by the school.

The school has seen significant changes in staff since the last inspection. The senior leadership team has been restructured with two new members joining the team. Several new teachers, including some who are newly qualified, have joined the school. There is also a newly appointed Chair of the Governing Body.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made

good progress in making improvements

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Standards across the school have improved. In 2010, the percentage of students in Key Stage 3 who reached or exceeded the school's challenging targets rose significantly, especially in mathematics. The percentage whose attainment was in line with or above the national expectations for their age was also significantly higher. This provided a much stronger foundation for raising standards in Key Stage 4. From the extensive data which the school collects on students' progress, there is

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convincing evidence that the pattern of improvements is continuing throughout the school with a sharp rise in 2010. The proportion of students on track to achieve five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is greater than in previous years and above the national average. The data indicate that, from their average starting points, these students have made good progress.

The school's specialist technology status continues to have a significant impact on standards. The development of the virtual learning environment has enabled students to develop and use independent learning skills. This is especially so in the sixth form where good progress has been made in enabling them to work effectively outside of lesson time.

The key reason for the improvement in students' achievement is the strong focus on raising standards brought about by the restructuring of the senior leadership team. The headteacher provides very clear direction for improvements and has been working hard with the senior leadership team to change the culture, throughout the school, to focus more sharply on the learning of students. This has resulted in better systems and procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision and students' outcomes. Secure data collection and analysis, improved tracking of students' progress and targeted intervention are now in place and have made a significant impact on the improvement in students' achievement. Improved monitoring and evaluation and well-focused training have resulted in an increased level of accountability that has raised teachers' expectations about what students can achieve. Actions have been taken to strengthen aspects of teaching such as matching tasks to the needs of students of all abilities and enabling students to develop and use independent learning skills. Sixth-form students are enthusiastic about the improved opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. They appreciate the range of creative and exciting lessons they now receive, where they are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups. The school's analysis of teaching and learning shows that the proportion of good and better lessons has increased significantly and at 73% meets the target set in the 2009 inspection report.

The school has made satisfactory improvements in developing, implementing and monitoring a cross-school literacy and numeracy policy. In particular, it has improved the consistency of good marking and the use of homework to help raise standards. Policies are now in place and have been agreed by the governing body. Implementation of the policies is taking place and, in some areas, good progress is evident. This is true of the literacy and numeracy policies where students in Key Stage 3 have made significant improvements in English and mathematics. The use of marking and homework to help raise standards is having a positive impact in some lessons. However, most of the work is at an early stage and so evidence of impact on students' learning is not yet secure.

The School Improvement Partner has made a valuable contribution to the recent improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Roger Whittaker
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 18-19 November 2009:

- Within 12 months, increase the proportion of good or better lessons to 70% by:
 - ensuring that the lesson observation system effectively monitors learning
 - ensuring that teaching caters for the needs of students of all abilities

- Within 12 months develop, implement and monitor a cross-school literacy and numeracy policy so that:
 - opportunities to develop numeracy and literacy skills are fully exploited in subjects other than mathematics and English
 - marking and homework become more consistent between subjects so that, for example, poor spelling and grammar are corrected

- Within 6 months, develop, the extent to which sixth-form students are encouraged to develop skills of independent learning by:
 - giving them the opportunity to attain and practice these skills in class
 - further developing the virtual learning environment so that students are able to learn and work more effectively outside of classes.