

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



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Mr J Platten
The Open Academy
Salhouse Road
Norwich
NR7 9DL

Dear Mr Platten

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of The Open Academy

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 16 June 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

Since the last inspection, the senior leadership team has been restructured from 12 to seven members. Six teachers have left the academy and have been replaced for September 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 17 November 2010, the academy 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

In 2010, the attainment of Year 11 students improved but remained low. Students made inadequate progress overall but their progress in English and mathematics was broadly in line with that found nationally. The academy's assessment information for current Year 11 students indicates that they are on track to improve on results in 2010, exceeding the targets set for them which are based on those of the top 25% of similar schools. Nevertheless, based on this projection, attainment would remain well below average. A majority of Year 11 students are on track to make the progress expected of them. However, not enough are on track to make good progress.

Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved. In lessons, most students are attentive and settle to work quickly. They work well in pairs and small groups, for example, annotating a skeleton diagram with anatomical terms in a BTEC sport lesson. They enjoy learning when teachers provide lively activities, for

example, replicating the process of sampling an animal population in a science lesson. However, in a minority of lessons, some students lose concentration because activities lack variety. The academy has reviewed its behaviour policy and now sets clearer expectations for students. The rate of exclusions and referrals to the internal exclusion room is falling. Students confirm that behaviour has improved but feel that teachers do not apply the system for managing behaviour consistently. However, they value the new rewards system and expanded student council.

Teaching is improving because senior leaders now monitor the quality of lessons regularly. They analyse this information rigorously and use it to tailor support for teachers through meetings to share effective practice, peer observation and coaching. This has increased the proportion of teaching which is good or better to close to the academy's 50% target. Senior staff have also reduced the incidence of inadequate teaching, although a small number of inadequate lessons persist. Many teachers use a wide range of activities to engage students' interest but some still talk for too long or restrict opportunities for students to learn actively. Students' progress is now reviewed regularly against the targets set for them. Students know their targets and say that they are clear about what they need to do to improve further.

The academy has reviewed the curriculum for all students and the revised structure for September 2011 increases the amount of time for the teaching of literacy to meet the needs of selected Key Stage 3 students. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been broadened to provide more vocational and applied courses, using the academy specialisms such as the Diploma and young apprenticeships in engineering. The academy's other specialism, the environment is increasingly reflected in a wide range of subjects.

The senior leadership team now have clear and discrete roles, including a separate sixth form leader. The academy action plan is very detailed although key priorities are not always sufficiently prominent. Improved processes for monitoring performance, based on more rigorous analysis of students' progress and teaching, provide senior leaders with a growing understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development. The governing body has reviewed its procedures to ensure closer scrutiny of the academy's performance. A member of the governing body attended each meeting between middle and senior leaders in the recent monitoring cycle. The academy has completed its audit of provision for community cohesion and is committed to developing facilities for the local community. At the time of this inspection, basic arrangements to safeguard students were in place.

The governing body's statement of action, produced after the last inspection, meets requirements. The academy has received effective support and guidance from a range of sources including the School Improvement Partner, local authority consultants and partner schools.

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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate the rate of students' learning and progress by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of good or better teaching to at least 50% by the end of 2011
 - stimulating students' interest and enthusiasm by making lessons more interesting, fun and including more practical activities
 - embedding procedures to monitor progress and use this data to ensure that students of all abilities achieve the targets set for them.

- Improve behaviour by:
 - clarifying the agreed policy for behaviour management and enlisting the full support of all staff to ensure that procedures are applied consistently
 - introducing incentives to reward good behaviour
 - developing the student council to foster the support and commitment of all students in meeting the aims and expectations of the academy.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - streamlining the senior leadership team so that roles and responsibilities are clearly focused on raising achievement
 - giving the leader of the sixth form full responsibility for raising standards and improving the quality of provision
 - actively promoting community cohesion so that by the end of 2011 students have a thorough understanding of different faiths, cultures and what it means to live in modern British society
 - encouraging all members of the governing body to engage fully in the work of the academy.