

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Serco**  
**Direct T** 0121 683 3888

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Mr S Clark  
Headteacher  
Tabor Science College  
Panfield Lane  
Braintree  
CM7 5XP

Dear Mr Clark

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Tabor Science College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 December 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please thank the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority advisers who found time to meet with me, and also thank the tremendous group of students who gave up their lunchtime to share their views on the school with me.

Since the previous inspection, eight teachers have left the school. An experienced senior leader has been appointed for one term to cover some of the responsibilities of two deputy headteachers who are currently absent from school due to illness. Another senior teacher has been seconded for two years from a local outstanding school to provide additional leadership capacity and lead science. A check of safeguarding procedures by HMI confirmed that all arrangements are secure.

As a result of the inspection on 30 March 2011, 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 school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

In 2011, a higher percentage of Year 11 students attained five or more A\* to C grades but the proportion attaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics remained below the national average. Since then, much more rigorous and systematic monitoring of teaching and the impact it has on students' learning and progress is leading to significant improvements. Current data shows that the large majority of students are making sufficient progress in most subjects and are on track

to meet teachers' expectations of them. Assessment data is much more robust because senior and faculty leaders review the progress of all individual students every two weeks.

Students talked positively about the English and mathematics 'combo' arrangements for those capable of attaining at least a C grade in both subjects but who need additional support to help them achieve it. Other students who have reached most of their minimum target grades wear their star badges with pride. Two thirds of Year 11 students have already attained one A\* to C grade and almost half have attained two GCSEs in a range of subjects. Specialist status in science is helping to forge links with local schools and makes a modest contribution to raising overall achievement.

Lesson observations carried out jointly between HMI and senior leaders confirmed the school's view of the quality of teaching and noted many emerging strengths. Teachers are much more focused on students' learning; they clarify what is to be learnt at the start of lessons, make regular checks to ensure that all students understand what they are doing and plan group-work and practical activities to stimulate and engage them. Not all teachers use assessment data to plan lessons that build on the prior learning of students. In the best lessons, teachers reinforce subject-specific language by providing a glossary of terms for each topic and spelling out words on the whiteboard when explaining new learning. They share examination requirements to help students prepare answers that will maximise their marks.

Decisive action by senior leaders and intensive support for less effective staff led by the best teachers is steadily eliminating inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of good or better teaching. Students recognise these improvements have been made and talked positively about good teaching in a range of subjects. Rigorous management of teachers' performance and intensive scrutiny of data by senior leaders are making all staff fully accountable for the standards achieved by students. Systematic reviews of each subject, including a detailed analysis of students' progress and a thorough evaluation of each teacher's work, are presented to the governing body by middle leaders to illustrate their effectiveness.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are driving improvements by raising expectations, challenging weaknesses and ensuring new procedures become embedded and sustained. Detailed improvement plans are thoroughly evaluated each half term by the governing body to ensure that the school is fully prepared for its next inspection. Senior leaders have welcomed the advice and intensive support provided by the local authority. Their statement of action has been revised to incorporate arrangements for reporting to parents and carers, and includes challenging targets and timescales for 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

John Mitcheson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011**

- Improve the learning and progress of all groups of students by:
  - eliminating inadequate teaching
  - using outstanding teaching as a professional model for all colleagues.
- Ensure that the assessments of students' achievement are used consistently to inform teaching across all subjects and all year groups.
- Review provision in all subject areas to ensure:
  - a clear focus on the quality of learning
  - subject-specific literacy is developed consistently.