

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

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

Serco
Direct T 0121 683 3888



4 May 2012

Mrs Colette Singleton
The Sir Robert Woodard Academy
Upper Boundstone Lane
Lancing
BN15 9QZ

Dear Mrs Singleton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Following my visit with David Webster and Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 2–3 May 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 the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2011. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

The academy may appoint two newly qualified teachers in the humanities department, one for geography and one for history.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Academic Board, the local young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the Department for Education - Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011

- Raise attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 to at least in line with the national average by summer 2013, and secure better teaching that capitalises on recent significant improvements in behaviour and attitudes to learning, by:
 - ensuring that clear learning objectives drive appropriate activities in all lessons, and that these result in provision which suits students' needs
 - gauging students' understanding throughout a lesson, and continually using this feedback to adjust the pace and style of learning
 - developing the capacity of leaders at all levels to improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching
 - monitoring the quality of teaching rigorously and judging it accurately
 - involving students and their parents and carers in developing strategies to improve the quality of everyone's learning, and in monitoring the effectiveness of these strategies.

- Make effective use of performance data to improve achievement by:
 - ensuring that the information about the attainment of individuals and groups available to all middle and senior leaders is accurate, informative and easy to access and use
 - using this information to plan lessons that meet the needs of individuals and groups.

- Improve the effectiveness with which leaders in the academy work together to exert a strong and positive influence on the quality of learning, by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels work closely and coherently to clearly stated common objectives, continually monitor progress towards them, and work together to remove barriers to improving learning
 - strengthening the capacity of governing body to challenge and support the work of senior staff.

- Improve the progress made by students in the sixth form so that it is at least satisfactory across all subjects by summer 2013, by:
 - ensuring there is sufficient capacity in the senior team to lead the sixth form effectively
 - ensuring that teaching in the sixth form is good by autumn 2012.

Special measures: monitoring of The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 May 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other staff, groups of students, the Chair of the Interim Academic Body and other governors, and representatives and consultants from the sponsor, Woodard Academies Trust.

Context

The substantive Principal leading the school at the time of the inspection left in December 2011. The present Principal took up the substantive post in January 2012. Since January, several teachers have left and been replaced, and there is currently one vacancy in English.

A new management structure is being developed that is intended to create a smaller, more highly focused core senior group supported by an extended faculty team that has specific responsibilities for improving a wide range of educational issues.

In January 2012, the new academy buildings opened after successfully moving from the old site over an extended Christmas break. The academy is still dealing with issues related to the accommodation and is working hard to adapt it to current educational needs.

Since the inspection, the sponsor, Woodard Academies Trust, has been given permission by the Secretary of State for Education to replace the governing body with an Interim Academic Board (IAB). This came into effect on 10 January 2012.

Achievement of students at the school

Students continue to enter the school with below average attainment. Since the inspection, new strategies have been introduced that have improved the rigour and accuracy of the analysis of students' performance. As a result, current assessments are more accurate and show that most students now make satisfactory progress, especially in Key Stage 4. Information on students' performance and inspection evidence indicate that current Year 11 students are expected to reach standards that are above those reached by Year 11 last year. This reverses the previous poor outcomes for Key Stage 4 students and reflects the intensive support these students receive.

In spite of significant disruption over the Christmas period due to moving into the new building, outcomes for Year 11 in English and mathematics are improving. Over

two thirds of students are now making at least expected progress in these subjects with a fifth of those making accelerated progress.

Inspection evidence indicates that disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress that is in line with their peers. However, the school's collection and use of information on these specific students are not yet secure and do not allow for an in-depth analysis of their issues over time. Provision for these students is currently subject to intensive in-depth review.

In the sixth form, achievement is also improving as the focus on raising the quality of teaching has an impact on learning. Outcomes for external module examinations support the academy's own internal assessments which highlight standards are improving in most subjects.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 and secure better teaching – satisfactory.
- Improve the progress made by students in the sixth form – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Teaching overall is improving as the proportion of good teaching increases. Teachers have a clearer understanding of their students' performance and how it can be improved. In the best lessons, teachers have higher expectations of their students' work and behaviour, and there is a focus on what students are expected to learn. In some classes, there is still an overemphasis on tasks rather than learning, and this prevents students from really engaging with their learning and taking responsibility for their own performance.

Teachers generally manage students and their behaviour appropriately and where lessons proceed at a fast pace no time is lost in dealing with behaviour issues. Where pace is slow and teachers talk too much, opportunities for students to participate in lessons are limited. Students can sometimes drift off task where too much time is spent on a particular activity or they are not given enough opportunities to be actively involved. Lessons are pitched at one level and do not meet the needs of all the different abilities in the class. Often, this is because teachers are not using a suitable range of challenging questioning strategies and ensuring that all students are drawn into contributing to the lessons.

Assessment strategies are improving and now give a more accurate picture of students' achievement, their prior learning and their understanding of tasks. Teachers now make better use of assessment information in their day-to-day lesson planning but its use in planning for future learning and the right level of challenge are not yet consistent across the school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Make effective use of performance data to improve achievement – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of students

The calm and happy atmosphere around the academy found at the last inspection continues, and students are very supportive and proud of their new school. They are certain that the new buildings have had a good impact on encouraging a positive atmosphere. When asked if behaviour had improved recently, a student commented, 'Our behaviour has not really improved – it is now just managed better'.

The students interviewed during the visit are mature and confident young people with definite opinions about the improvements in their school. They acknowledge that the teaching is improving but are clear about where further improvements are needed. They particularly appreciate the work of the new Principal in improving the quality of their education and life in school.

Relationships between students and with the staff are a strength of the academy. Sixth form students are valued members of the school community and are good role models for younger students.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

In her short time leading the academy, the new Principal has focused successfully on the areas for development identified by the inspection. The IAB actively supports the senior leaders while also challenging them about students' achievement. The professional support provided by the IAB and their close working relationship with senior staff has been effective in speeding up the urgent improvements needed in the academy. This work is supported by recent major reviews of focused aspects of the academy's work, for example the sixth form, carried out since January.

To address the decline in achievement, the Principal and senior leadership team introduced a rigorous tracking system for monitoring students' performance. Staff meet regularly to discuss and track student's progress. Appropriate intervention is then provided and those students needing the most help are carefully mentored.

The senior leadership team has also introduced a thorough monitoring of teaching and learning. Following this monitoring, intensive support has been put in place to help and support teachers in improving their practice and this is helping to raise the standard and quality of teaching.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure students' safety and all current safeguarding requirements are met. The Principal has made a determined effort to work with and involve parents and carers through improved communications especially at evening events.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness with which leaders in the academy work together to exert a strong and positive influence on the quality of learning – satisfactory

External support

The sponsor's statement of action is appropriate in addressing the issues raised in the inspection. The sponsor has a clear understanding of the issues faced by the academy and is targeting support effectively. A Woodard Academy Partner has been appointed and allocated time to work with the academy and support the Principal with her agenda for change.

In addition, the academy has benefited from the work of the consultants supporting in specific areas such as controlled assessments in English. The external team working with the academy is flexible in implementing the support plan and this means that the academy and sponsor are well placed to respond to any additional emerging issues.