

Serco Inspections  
20 Colmore Circus Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0121 679 9165  
**Direct email:** victoria.mortimore2@serco.com

19 April 2013

Karen Grimes, Headteacher  
Stowupland High School  
Church Road  
Stowupland  
Stowmarket  
IP14 4BQ

Dear Mrs Grimes

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Stowupland High School, Suffolk local authority.**

Following my visit to your school on 18 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2013.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the acting deputy headteacher, the head of sixth form, the senior leader responsible for the development of teaching, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and a group of students. The school action plan was evaluated. In addition, you provided a tour of the school to familiarise me with your school.

**Context**

Since the section 5 inspection the deputy headteacher has left the school and an acting deputy headteacher has joined you from a local school. An advanced skills teacher in mathematics has been appointed.

**Main findings**

The action plan identifies what the school will do to address the main priorities for improvement identified in the inspection. The school was asked to increase the proportion of good teaching in order to raise achievement, particularly in mathematics. Leaders and managers were also asked to check students' progress

more regularly and make sure that governors are sufficiently trained in order to challenge the school more rigorously.

A strength of the action plan in the short term is that actions have a clear focus; many activities are scheduled for the Spring and Summer terms so that students achieve higher grades in their tests and examinations. The school's monitoring shows that standards are rising. However, the next phase of the plan requires further detail that shows how the school plans to sustain improvement. In particular, plans should give greater emphasis to teaching and how this will become at least good in every subject before the next inspection. Senior staff are now evaluating students' achievements when judging the quality of teaching. Discussion with a group of students indicated that teachers should take their suggestions, for example about the usefulness of marking, into account.

Students appreciate the changes that are making an impact in mathematics. For example, they value the breadth of extra-curricular opportunities to consolidate what they have learned in maths lessons. Sixth formers praised the strategy to involve a university lecturer in the teaching of mathematics. A new system of tracking students' progress is also helping teachers identify students' needs more speedily in maths and other subjects. However, monitoring by senior staff shows that more teachers still need to use assessments to prepare activities that are tailored to students' individual needs. Future lesson observations should pursue such weaknesses in order to check that the helpful feedback given is acted upon. Increased reference to the Teacher's Standards when managing performance is an example of improvements already made.

Governors have now been trained in analysing progress data which has prepared them to ask more probing questions about students' achievement. Increased availability and use of assessment data has also made teachers more accountable. However, the school's progress leaders are not yet monitoring students' progress across subjects. Equally, the accuracy of baseline assessments when students join the school in Year 9 are not moderated in all subjects. This lessens the value of the new student tracking system in helping to accelerate students' progress and raise their attainment.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- show how the school plans to sustain and review improvements over time
- give a higher profile to teaching in the action plan and through the involvement of students
- build on the improved progress tracking by working with middle schools.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

**External support**

The school has received well targeted support from the local authority through help preparing the action plan, arranging the secondment of the acting deputy headteacher, providing a series of visits by a specialist mathematics adviser, pairing the school with a strong mathematics department and by training governors in the use of data.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**