

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com

10 May 2013

Mrs Ursula Byrne
Interim Headteacher
Sandy Upper School
Engayne Avenue
Sandy
SG19 1BL

Dear Mrs Byrne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sandy Upper School

Following my visit to your school on 9 May 2013 with Zarina Connolly Her Majesty's Inspector(HMI), I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. HMI conducted a telephone interview with the preferred sponsor. The local authority statement of action and the school improvement plan were evaluated.

HMI conducted eight joint observations with senior managers; all teachers were offered professional feedback. The inspectors led a round table discussion of the quality of teaching, reviewed the school's monitoring of teaching and standards, and scrutinised marking in those classes visited.

Context

The previous substantive headteacher left the school in September 2012 and, under local authority guidance, the governing body began to seek academy sponsorship. A high performing secondary school provided an interim headteacher and executive support from its own Principal. These arrangements finished on the final day of the previous inspection. The governing body considered proposals from two prospective sponsors and chose to seek sponsored academy status under the auspices of the Barnfield Federation of Academies. These proposals are awaiting ministerial approval.

Since the inspection a new interim headteacher, supported by a small team of consultants, has been appointed to lead the school until the 31 August 2013. Seven members of staff have since left and a further eight have resigned. The Barnfield Federation, as preferred sponsor, has committed itself to provide a new substantive Principal.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

This is the school's third leadership team this academic year. The current interim headteacher and her team have brought a quiet efficiency to the leadership of the school. They have planned significant changes to the subjects available and how they are to be organised for September 2013, working closely with the governing body's preferred sponsor.

The monitoring of teaching is robust. HMI invited senior staff to join the observation of teaching. In a formal review of this process, the views expressed by senior leaders matched the judgements given by the inspectors. In this sample of eight lessons chosen by the school, inspectors saw good teaching in drama, mathematics and science; outstanding teaching was seen in history.

Self-evaluation is accurate and the school development plan illustrates the very sharp focus on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. It is essential that the current leadership team remains in place until the Barnfield Federation can provide a substantive Principal to lead the school into academy status.

The school is calm; the students were attentive in class, polite and helpful. The governing body ensures that requirements for the safeguarding of students are met.

The governing body became aware of inconsistencies in the information presented to governors in the summer of 2012 and took action to improve the leadership of the

school. Since the inspection, an executive improvement board has been formed. Governors are knowledgeable and aware of the pressing need to raise standards.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection utilising the support of the Barnfield Federation teaching school. HMI will review this matter on a case-by-case basis.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector