

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

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

Direct T 0121 679 9168
Direct email: beverley.joyner@serco.com



10 June 2013

Mr David Elliott
Headteacher
New Line Learning Academy
Boughton Lane
Maidstone
ME15 9QL

Dear Mr Elliott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New Line Learning Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 6 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, a group of students, and representatives of the Trustees. I evaluated the academy improvement plan and made brief visits to lessons.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection 3 staff have left the academy.

Main findings

You, your senior leadership team and the Trustees are focusing staff on the right areas of the academy's work. Improving teaching is rightly a high priority, alongside raising student attendance. The academy development plan identifies appropriate actions to bring about change but lacks clear impact measures. You are checking the progress being made, for example in raising standards, but it would aid the swift

identification of what works, what does not, and the next steps forward if the key indicators that 'we are moving in the right direction' were clearer in the plan.

The approach adopted by you and senior colleagues to the monitoring of teaching has been sharpened to focus more on the impact teachers make on pupils' learning. This is enabling more accurate feedback to staff about their strengths and areas for development. The references now make to the Department for Education's Teaching Standards when evaluating the quality of teaching help ensure greater accuracy. Senior staff are using the outcomes of lesson observations increasingly well to identify staff training needs, and you are taking sensible steps to link advances in staff salaries to their impact on students' achievement.

Teaching is improving. Inadequate teaching has reduced sharply and students are more positive about their learning experiences, although their engagement in learning remains variable. Subject and year leaders are getting more involved in developing the quality of teaching, but are not yet independent enough in how they do this. Subject leaders are not exploiting their subject expertise so as to ensure subject teaching is consistently good.

Better tracking of students' progress over time is leading to more effective teaching in lessons and additional support sessions for those who are behind. Targets are more challenging for students overall. Senior and middle leaders are more aware of the need to improve progress by key groups such as those in receipt free school meals, those with special educational needs, and more able students. However, it is not clear enough in all levels of development planning what is being done to improve provision for these students, or how the impact will be checked.

Staff are working effectively to improve attendance and reduce exclusions. They are making a positive impact in both areas, but here too students in receipt free school meals and those with special educational needs remain over-represented.

Your plans for curriculum development in September address the weaknesses noted in the section 5 inspection report, particularly giving students more time for English and mathematics. A review of how this time will be used is a sensible move at this stage, as are the plans to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum.

The Trustee's now more established 'teaching and learning' committee is focusing well on the impact of work to improve teaching. They link closely with the academy development plan but the lack of explicit targets noted above hinders their work in checking the progress made.

Senior leaders and Trustees are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- Increase the involvement of subject leaders in improving teaching in their subject areas, including by making better use of links with partner schools to develop their expertise.
- Give more emphasis in development plans to improving outcomes for specific groups of students, notably those receiving free school meals, with special educational needs, and the more able.
- Ensure development plans have more measurable targets.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

I am pleased that you are making more regular use of your partner secondary school in the Trust, for example to improve staff development and the quality of teaching. It is also positive that you are looking to work with a wider range of schools to improve practice, and develop the skills of subject leaders. However, you will need to clarify how they make use of these connections if they are to yield the required benefits.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of Trustees and the Director of Children's Services for insert local authority name and as below.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector