

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

Direct T 0121 6799169  
Direct email: [mathew.mitchell@serco.com](mailto:mathew.mitchell@serco.com)



19 July 2013

Dr Carin Taylor  
Principal  
Soham Village College  
Sand Street  
Soham  
Ely  
CB7 5AA

Dear Dr Taylor

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Soham Village College**

Following my visit to your school on 18 July 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 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, students in Years 7 to 10, members of the governing body and representatives of the Trust to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. You accompanied me on brief visits to a small number of lessons in which I looked at students' books. I also scrutinised evidence you kindly provided to demonstrate the actions you have taken since the last inspection.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, you have appointed an acting head of English. You have re-defined a strategic role within the senior leadership team to oversee the quality of teaching in the school.

## **Main findings**

Your school improvement plan covers all of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection, and you have identified members of the governing body to monitor each area of improvement.

Your appointment of a temporary head of English is improving teaching in this subject. She is working well with colleagues from Bottisham Village College to improve the accuracy of assessment. The director of mathematics is improving the quality of teaching by providing additional support where he identifies teaching as less than good. Students' books in English show more detailed marking and suggestions on how to improve their work, but this is not consistent across all subjects.

You rightly realised that your assessments of the quality of teaching in the school were based on too little evidence, and have now expanded your monitoring activities to include more frequent visits to lessons, closer scrutiny of students' work and discussions with students about the progress they are making. You are improving the quality of teaching by providing appropriate training and support.

Members of the governing body now have an improved understanding of information on students' progress, and use this to identify whether standards are improving. They have responded swiftly to the last inspection by identifying the need to link a governor to the area of teaching and learning, and by linking a more suitably qualified governor to the English faculty. Visits to faculties result in a written report with points for further action. Governors have already scheduled an external review of governance for the end of September 2013.

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

- Ensure the best practice in marking becomes consistent across all subjects.
- Clarify the difference in roles to be played by the Trust and the local governing body in securing rapid school improvement.

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

## **External support**

The Staploe Education Trust acknowledges that little action has been taken since the last inspection in the form of external support at Trust level. It is not yet clear how support is to be offered at Trust level, although support and challenge at local

governance level is becoming more effective. The school has worked well with other schools through its teaching alliance links to develop skills in leadership and management, improve assessment procedures and develop the quality of teaching. It has also used the local authority's Head of Secondary School Improvement on a consultancy basis to scrutinise the action plan and to lead the review on governance.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**