

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 679 9153  
Direct email: [naik.sandhu@serco.com](mailto:naik.sandhu@serco.com)



9 June 2014

Mr Anthony Fitzpatrick  
Headteacher  
Barnwell School  
Collenswood Road  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire  
SG2 9HQ

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barnwell School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 that all students respond to precise feedback upon their work that makes clear what they need to do next in order to improve
- continue to improve teaching, so that the proportion of students exceeding expected progress in English is close to or above the national average by the end of Key Stage 4
- further develop the school's positive work with parents so that they have the information they need to best support their children's learning.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and teachers, a group of students and five members of the governing body to discuss the actions

taken since the last inspection. I made brief visits to a number of lessons and looked at the way teachers give students feedback about their work. I evaluated the school's improvement plans and documents relating to the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management.

## **Context**

A number of teachers have left the school since the previous inspection. A new deputy headteacher of the sixth form joined the school in January.

## **Main findings**

Overall, students are making more rapid progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics, at Key Stage 3. More students are on track to make the nationally-expected level of progress in GCSE English than has been the case in recent years, but the proportion likely to exceed the expected level of progress remains below national figures. A far higher proportion of sixth-form students is working towards A\* to B grades than was the case in 2013.

You and your senior leaders communicate confidence about the school's potential, and clarity about what must happen for it to be realised. Teachers are responding to this clear sense of direction. Since the previous inspection, the most effective teachers have been giving their colleagues precisely-tailored support, to help them improve aspects of their teaching. Regular and robust reviews of individual teachers' performance have started to show the impact of this support. Senior leaders support the work of subject leaders well in checking standards, challenging less effective teaching, and improving its quality within their subject areas.

Leaders and teachers are using accurate information on students' progress to set more challenging targets, and plan activities that help them take the next steps in their learning and close any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Systems that track students' progress are now being used to identify those who need additional support. Monitoring records suggest that it is having a rapid and positive effect on the rates of progress made by most students, including those in the sixth form. Leaders report a sharp increase in the proportion of students who are determined to do well at GCSE, but believe that some could set their sights still higher. Leaders have improved the clarity of the information parents receive about their children's progress and recognise that some would value additional information about the most effective ways in which they can encourage the ambition, and support the learning, of their sons and daughters.

The large majority of teachers are giving students the opportunity to respond to precisely-targeted advice that makes clear what they need to do in order to improve, following recent changes to the marking policy. Many students respond to this feedback and make faster progress; some do not and continue to make the same mistakes. Literacy standards are rising because teachers are highlighting errors in

students' spelling and punctuation more consistently, and individuals who need it are receiving effective additional support.

Governors are working with senior leaders to monitor progress towards the school's ambitious improvement plans. They challenge underperformance robustly.

Governors have helped shape recent changes to the behaviour policy, which have resulted in a decline in the incidence of low level disruption and a fall in the number of fixed-term exclusions. Governors have worked with senior leaders to devise new strategies to reduce absence; attendance has improved for all groups and it is now close to the national average.

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 local authority has provided you with a range of sources of effective support. Subject advisers in English, maths, modern foreign languages and science are reviewing the current curriculum and planning future changes. Advisers are helping to evaluate aspects of the school's work, and provide support for middle and senior leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**