

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 9161
Direct email: ann.morris@serco.com

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Mr C Boxall
Principal
Grace Academy Coventry
Wigston Road
Coventry
CV2 2RH

Dear Mr Boxall

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grace Academy Coventry

Following my visit to your academy on 10 June 2014, 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team, the Chair and members of the Governing Body and representatives of the academy sponsor to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I reviewed the sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plans, which have been combined to form one document. I was shown around the academy and visited lessons in Years 8 and 9 English and Year 10 mathematics. During these visits, I looked at the work in students' books and spoke to them about their learning. I also met with 15 students from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. In addition, I reviewed the data that the academy has on students' progress and the minutes of governing body meetings. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including the vetting checks on staff new to the academy.

Context

In April 2014, the Interim Principal was appointed to the substantive post. Since the inspection in January, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed and a Vice-Principal has relinquished their post. Five members of staff have left the academy. Eight teachers have joined the academy, filling posts in English, mathematics, humanities and science.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

The Principal and senior leaders have taken incisive action to act on the inspection findings. They have generated an effective action plan that is appropriately incorporated with the sponsor's statement of action.

Academy leaders have prioritised improving the quality of teaching and have taken effective action to increase the rate of students' progress. The introduction of training for teachers and practices from the Improving Teacher Programme (ITP) are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Information provided by the academy shows that the proportion of good and outstanding teaching has increased since the inspection in January. The recently introduced tracking system enables academy leaders and teachers to systematically monitor and evaluate the progress of students, including different groups of students, such as those with special educational needs. This shows that an increasing number of students are making expected and better than expected progress. This is particularly the case in Year 10. Students say that more teachers are meeting their individual needs and that marking is helping them to improve their work. However, as a result of the work scrutiny and in discussions with students, it is apparent that the quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent across subjects and individual teachers. This is recognised by academy leaders.

Academy leaders have made clear to students the behaviour expected of them in and out of lessons. As a consequence, the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions has reduced. Information provided by the academy shows that the number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced and the number of times students' good work and behaviour is recognised and praised has increased. However, the work scrutiny revealed examples of untidy, rushed or incomplete work, and students say that students' positive attitudes to learning are inconsistent.

The Principal has introduced clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the monitoring and evaluation of students' progress. This, along with the introduction of the new tracking system, ensures that students' work and progress are closely

checked and those falling behind benefit from appropriate and speedy intervention. However, the quality of leadership and the impact it has on students' progress is inconsistent across the academy.

Issues concerning the large number of temporary teachers, raised at the inspection in January, are being tackled by academy leaders. There is an increasing number of permanent staff and the academy is in the process of advertising and appointing new staff to start in September 2014. However, there are still issues in the staffing of science.

The external review of governance has been completed. However, an action plan to tackle the suggested areas for improvement has not been produced or been incorporated into the statement of action and improvement plan.

The academy is being well supported. This support comes from a National Leader of Education (NLE) and from a local teaching school alliance.

The sponsor's and academy's statement of action and improvement plan addresses all the key areas for improvement from the previous inspection and is linked to a varied programme of support for staff, and senior and middle leaders, provided by a nearby teaching school alliance and external consultants. An Academy Improvement and Monitoring Board (AIMB) has been set up to monitor the progress of the improvement plan and to review the impact of support.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's and academy's joint statement of action and improvement plan is fit for purpose. The following refinements are recommended:

- ensure an overview is provided of how the plan extends into the longer term
- ensure that specific dates are given for when actions should be started or completed
- identify how and by when governors will tackle the areas for improvement identified in the external review of governance
- provide greater detail on how and when the work of the academy will be monitored
- clearly detail the resources needed to increase the rate of students' progress.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Coventry, The Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries

Her Majesty's Inspector