

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 9153
Direct email: naik.sandhu@serco.com



16 June 2014

Mr R A Jacobs
The Chase
Geraldine Road
Malvern
WR14 3NZ

Dear Mr Jacobs

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Chase

Following my visit to your academy on 13 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 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 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The academy should take immediate action to:

- focus your action plan much more sharply on the areas for action identified by the section 5 inspection in February and ensuring that the plan brokers a programme of support through external partnerships to help the academy to tackle the key actions, identifies intermediate milestones which can be used to monitor progress against each action to make it clear what is required at specific points in the journey to become good or better within two years shows how the key actions will be monitored, by whom and by when so that academy leaders and governors can confirm the academy is on track as planned
- ensure that governors are provided with information about students' progress as well as attainment so that they are better able to hold academy leaders to account for the achievements of all students, in particular those students eligible for support through pupil premium

- take urgent steps to ensure that assessment information for students at Key Stage 3 is accurate and has been checked through internal moderation and an external validation process, especially in English and mathematics

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, representatives from the Governing Body, a headteacher from another secondary school who has been acting as your mentor and a group of teachers from your mathematics department, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A review was carried out of a small sample of books from students to look at early signs of improvement in marking and feedback to students, together with a scrutiny of indications for achievement in 2014 and 2015 and attendance information. New policies that have been written were examined and your post-Ofsted action plan was evaluated.

Context

You have re-structured the roles of your senior leadership team to accommodate a reduction in the number of senior leaders in the academy from September. These new roles have just begun.

Main findings

Since your section 5 inspection, you and your senior leaders have remained committed to your aim to improve achievement for all students in the academy and have worked together to secure the support of all staff in this aim. There are early signs of improvement in some areas but this has been slow and much of your improvement work is only planned for implementation across the whole academy from September.

Teachers are now more able to make better use of progress data in planning for lessons and to identify individuals requiring extra support, as a result of your successful implementation of a new progress tracking system. However, your own evaluations indicate that Key Stage 3 assessment data may be unreliable and therefore you cannot yet be confident in the use of this data to inform your judgements on the quality of teaching over time, or to identify if students are making good progress over Key Stage 3. It is very important that academy leaders quickly improve the reliability of this data through internal moderation of student work, and through external validation, particularly in English and in mathematics. Assessment information at Key Stage 4 is more reliable and indications are that there will be a marked improvement in attainment and progress for 2014 compared with 2013, with a narrowing in the gap in progress for students receiving support through pupil premium.

Currently there is too much emphasis on providing governors with information on attainment rather than progress. Governors do not know about the gaps in progress that exist between students eligible for funding through pupil premium compared with their peers; nor can they comment on the speed at which this gap is closing. They are therefore unable to evaluate the impact of spending of this grant. No external review of the use and impact of pupil premium spending has taken place, as was recommended in your section 5 report. There are plans to look at how pupil premium funding is being used in another school but this has not yet taken place. The school would gain a wider range of information to inform its improvement if a range of other schools could be visited to look at a greater variety of different strategies in use, in addition to carrying out the recommended external review.

Academy leaders have continued to focus their efforts on improving teaching and learning. At the time of your section 5 inspection, your 'masterclass' programme was only available to a sample of teachers. This has now been opened to all teaching staff and in some areas you are starting to see the early signs of improvement as teachers develop their skills. Within mathematics, teachers explained how they have improved the way in which they ask questions which make students think really hard about their work and, as a mathematics department, are more confident in identifying misconceptions and using these to plan the next steps in lessons. From a small sample of student books seen, across a range of subjects, there were good examples of teachers giving detailed information to students to help them to improve their work and students are starting to act on the advice given. You have developed new policies for teaching and learning and your quality assurance process, together with a new policy on feedback. Although these have been adopted by some departments already, these policies will not be an expectation across the whole academy, until September. There are still too many areas where your monitoring shows you are not yet able to see any impact of your support strategies.

Improvements in the way in which attendance is monitored across the academy mean that you are now able to monitor more effectively the attendance of individual groups of students. Your analyses show that attendance is improving across the whole academy with a marked improvement in that of students supported by the pupil premium grant.

You have refined your existing development plan to include the areas for improvement identified from your section 5 inspection. However, this plan needs to have a much sharper focus on the key actions required to make this academy good or better. Key staff should be identified who will be responsible for particular actions, with clear deadlines set and milestones along the way to help senior leaders and governors to monitor progress and identify any slippage. The development plan does not identify how other schools or partners will be used to support the academy in its improvement journey.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection. I intend to visit the academy again in the autumn term of the next academic year.

External support

You have received some support in your first year as headteacher from a national leader of education from another school in the local authority which has been effective in helping you to secure some key changes. There is currently no other support programme in place for the academy and senior leaders and governors are recommended to access additional external support through other partnerships.

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

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) as the school has a sixth form
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk] – as this is a converter academy.