

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 9158  
**Direct email:** rachel.dayan@serco.com



17 September 2014

Mr Lee Francis  
Principal  
Diamond Academy  
Hillary Road  
Thetford  
IP24 3DP

Dear Mr Francis

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Diamond Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 16 September 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 May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- ensure that new staff joining the academy this term, and others to be appointed later this year, receive the support they need to establish themselves quickly and make a significant contribution to raising pupils' achievement.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your Vice-Principal, and two representatives of the academy's sponsor, one of whom is the Chair of the Governing Body and a Progress Board, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy's improvement plans were evaluated. You shared with me the results achieved by Year 6 pupils in this year's national tests. Walking the academy with you enabled me to see pupils at work in lessons.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, three teachers have left the academy. Two new teachers have been appointed, one of whom is an overseas teacher who takes up her position in the academy next week. The Year 3 class is currently being taught by a Higher Level Teaching Assistant on a temporary basis. The academy is currently advertising to recruit two other teachers, one of whom will be responsible for leading mathematics.

## **Main findings**

This year, the percentage of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected levels in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics declined. Results in mathematics are particularly low. You feel that this was mainly because a significant proportion of pupils, who were showing improved progress in lessons, did not perform well under test conditions. Your assessment data indicates that pupils in other classes are making improved progress this year.

You have made a number of changes to specifically address this issue and ensure that pupils are well-prepared for national tests. Pupils have mental mathematics sessions each day and are tested at the end of the week during 'prove-it Fridays' to confirm what they have learnt. In Year 6, mathematics is taught in groups of similar ability. In addition, a new calculation policy has been agreed and implemented, and practical resources to aid the teaching of numeracy skills have been shared amongst teachers.

In English, daily literacy lessons now include opportunities for pupils to practise their spellings and handwriting skills. They are given opportunities to improve their writing in a range of other subjects and are expected to complete an extended writing task each half-term. Regular checks are made of their work, and the quality of teachers' marking. Pupils are set homework weekly in mathematics and English.

Your monitoring of pupils' progress, based on their starting points on entry into Year 3, is providing regular assessment data to illustrate how well pupils are achieving. A cycle of regular visits to classrooms and scrutiny of pupils' books by you and your Vice-Principal is giving you a clearer view of the impact recent changes are having at this early stage. Your leaders of literacy and numeracy are given time each week to monitor teaching and learning in their subjects.

Rewards and sanctions for managing pupils' behaviour have been reaffirmed. A house system will be introduced later this term to generate pupils' wider interest and engagement in curricular and enrichment activities. Improved liaison with parents is beginning to have an impact on reducing pupils' lateness.

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**

Your sponsor is providing the academy with a range of intensive support which is valued by you and your staff, but this is not yet leading to widespread improvements in the outcomes for all pupils. You and the academy sponsor recognise the need to raise achievement quickly, and feel that once new teachers become firmly established there are no significant barriers preventing it from improving quickly. A local Governing Body and a Progress Board both led by the sponsor are monitoring the academy's development and identifying what further support and challenge is required to enable it to become good at its next inspection. Procedures for safeguarding pupils remain robust.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**