

Serco Inspections
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: 01216 799164
Direct email: tim.ogbourn@serco.com



Mr Scott Preston
Headteacher
Ernulf Academy
Barford Road
Eynesbury
St Neots
PE19 2SH

Dear Mr Preston

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Ernulf Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 September 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in June 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013

- Improve teaching and students' achievement, particularly in mathematics, in the main school and the sixth form by making sure that:
 - work in lessons is always well matched to the different skills and abilities of all students
 - students' work is marked regularly, with targets to help improve the work that are checked by teachers to make sure students respond to the advice given
 - teachers spend less time providing introductions and explanations, so students can work more on their own
 - teachers use different types of questions more effectively to help students of different abilities to develop their understanding.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - reviewing the priorities in the academy's improvement plan, so they can be clearly monitored against their impact on the quality of teaching and achievement at key points throughout the year
 - developing the skills of those responsible for leading subjects so that teaching and achievement in all subjects are consistently and accurately monitored
 - devising a system for all teachers and leaders to share good practice in a coordinated way.

- Make sure the governing body is better able to influence improvements in teaching and achievement by:
 - providing governors with regular, more detailed information about the quality of teaching and achievement
 - regularly and thoroughly checking this information at governing body meetings against the objectives in the academy improvement plan.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 16 September 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the headteacher of the partner academy, the Chair of the Governing Body and two groups of students. He also undertook joint observations of five part lessons with members of the senior team and looked at students' books when in class. The inspector also scrutinised documentation to show evidence of the measures taken to improve standards, achievement and the quality of teaching. These included attendance figures and the latest information about the progress students are making. He also looked at a report of a visit made by an external adviser. The single central record, which confirms that safeguarding checks have been made on new staff, was examined.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the redundancy programme has been completed and fifteen members of staff have left the academy. Six new members of staff have been appointed. An external consultant has completed an independent review of governance and the governing body has modified its committee structure as a result. The academy has attained the gold award for Investors in People and also an Artsmark.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and senior leaders have further strengthened the improvement initiatives which were being introduced at the time of the previous visit and have sharpened their plans for making additional changes. In this process, the academy has used the resources of the partnership well. It has been closely involved with its partner academy in joint partnership planning, involving sharing teaching and leadership capacity and expertise where relevant, and organising joint professional development events. There is thus a growing confidence at different levels throughout the academy that a smaller staffing complement will not mean a fall in standards or undermine the drive to improve further.

The improvements in the generation and use of assessment information have been extended to all parts of the academy and data analysis has been sharpened. This process has led to further improvements in students' achievement. The latest examination results were a big improvement on those of last year. The results for those pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding are also improving so that the gap with other students in the school is closing further. Students in the sixth form continue to achieve well, given their attainment on entry to study programmes. The most-able students are still not challenged effectively enough in some areas of the curriculum.

The more rigorous focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning noted at the previous monitoring visit has been extended to include all middle leaders and heads of subjects. There is now a clearer standardised process for judging the quality of teaching, although this is not yet applied consistently well across the academy.

The external review of governance indicated clearly that the governing body has strengthened further its ability to hold the academy to account for its performance, and the performance of individual members of staff. It has sensibly restructured its committees to reduce unnecessary over-lap of responsibilities and to ensure that each of the partner academies are reviewed with equal rigour. It has successfully generated a balanced budget and managed the redundancy process well without compromising standards and the quality of teaching. This is especially the case in relation to ensuring that those students for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding improve their attainment and further close the gap with fellow students in the academy.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The leadership capacity of the academy has been strengthened by the improvements made by joint partnership leadership initiatives. This in turn has meant the procedures for monitoring and reviewing the main areas for improvement have been sharpened further.
- Middle leaders and heads of subjects have improved their use and analysis of assessment information better to inform their lesson observations and lesson planning. This has also improved the planning for individual student support where students are in danger of falling behind.
- Students say they have noticed an improvement in the way teachers mark their work and that the use of minimum expected grades has increased their confidence in knowing how well they are doing.
- The monitoring and review of the quality of teaching has improved further and the accuracy of judgments made by senior leaders is often moderated by external consultants to confirm an improving profile.
- Attendance continues to improve and compares very favourably with national figures. Procedures for unnecessary absence have been tightened and parents are challenged robustly when such absences occur.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Although the quality of marking in books has improved, there remains an inconsistency in the way teachers apply the academy's policy relating to improving the presentation of work in books and the correction of grammatical errors. Not all books have the presentation stickers in them and on some occasions, even when they are in place, poor presentation is not challenged.

- The standardised lesson planning sheets are not always clear enough about how the most-able students are to be appropriately challenged. Work in books and part lesson observations identified that a lack of adequate challenge for this group of students remains to be addressed effectively by the academy.
- Books indicate that students are not often enough required to write at length on the topics they are studying. This indicates that the writing skills for answering questions in examinations that allocate higher marks are not consistently well developed.
- The academy is about to undertake an audit of its provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students. This is an urgent task before the next section 5 inspection takes place.

External support

The academy has strengthened its leadership capacity through much improved joint working with its partner academy and through links with other schools in Huntingdonshire. External consultants have been used effectively to help improve key areas which required improvement at the time of the last section 5 inspection. This is making a clear impact on the work and performance of middle leaders and subject heads of department. The local authority still provides good support when requested. The external review of governance has had a very positive effect on the work and performance of the governing body.