

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 679 9169
Direct email: matthew.mitchell@serco.com



26 September 2014

Mr Stephen Munday
Executive Principal
The Voyager Academy
Mountsteven Avenue
Walton
Peterborough
PE4 6HX

Dear Mr Munday

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Voyager Academy

Following my visit with Michelle Winter, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Joanna Peach and Lynn Lowery, Additional Inspectors to your academy on 24–25 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

- The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.
- The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, their behavior and how they present their work
 - all students receive high quality feedback about their work
 - academy policies are consistently applied in all classrooms
 - errors in literacy, especially punctuation, spelling and grammar, are corrected in all lessons.

- Improve achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that:
 - more-able students attain higher grades in GCSE examinations
 - students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make more rapid progress
 - the wide gap in attainment between students supported through the pupil premium and other students is closed.

- Urgently improve the standard of behaviour so that:
 - lessons are not disrupted, and learning occurs in a calm and orderly environment
 - students are respectful of one another and all staff
 - students arrive punctually to the academy and to all lessons
 - attendance at the academy and in lessons rises swiftly
 - the academy's revised behavior code is adhered to consistently.

- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - senior leaders take responsibility for setting and maintaining high expectations of behavior
 - senior leaders spend much more of their time ensuring that lessons are not disrupted and that incidences of poor behavior are tackled swiftly
 - more is done to support and improve teaching throughout the academy
 - leaders at all levels, including governors, work collaboratively to bring about the necessary improvements.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24 September 2014

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal and other senior leaders, four subject leaders, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors met with senior leaders, the coordinator of special educational needs and other support staff to investigate complaints received by Ofsted. The inspector sought to establish whether the academy is doing enough to protect students from being radicalised, ensure the morale of staff and monitor the effectiveness of the academy's student support and special educational needs department.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit several teachers have left the academy and 27 new teachers, including three Teach First staff, 5 trainees from abroad, 5 newly qualified teachers and 2 unqualified teachers took up their posts at the start of this term. An associate principal employed to lead improvements to the quality of teaching now spends two days each week in the academy. The number of students joining the academy in Year 7 this year is similar to the previous year and the number of students joining the sixth form has increased.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Overall results in this year's GCSE examinations show that the proportion of Year 11 students attaining five or more C grades including English and mathematics is similar to the lower-than-average results achieved last year. Students achieved well in English due to effective teaching, more rigorous monitoring of their progress and ensuring that they were well prepared for their examination. The proportions attaining at least a C grade and making or exceeding expected progress were much higher than last year. Results in mathematics declined slightly compared with the previous year. Half of the students in Year 11 made expected progress. In science, results were particularly low and continued to decline.

The academy is making improvements in some areas but not in others. For example, the proportion of more-able students attaining higher A*, A and B grades in GCSE English and mathematics increased this year but in a significant number of other subjects, GCSE results remain far too low. Current assessment data show that not all students in Key Stage 3 are making the progress expected of them. Also, the gap in attainment between students eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding provided by the government for children eligible for free school meals) and other students widened.

The quality of teaching

In English, teachers typically set clear expectations of students' behaviour and use a range of techniques such as assessing their own and others' work to enable them to progress well. Teachers make sure that students know their targets and marking identifies what they need to do to improve their work. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are corrected and teachers comment on the quality of students' handwriting and presentation. Results in English show that students whose first language is not English make similar progress to other students. However, this is not the case in all subjects. Inspectors found that often, these students are not given enough support in lessons to help them learn well.

Students' current progress, based on lessons seen by inspectors and in particular a scrutiny of their books, shows that it requires further improvement. This is because not all teachers are responding well enough to the recommendations made in the last inspection, and senior leaders are not holding them sufficiently to account to make sure that they do so. Teachers' expectations are still not high enough. The tasks they set continue to lack challenge for the more-able students and often fail to capture the interest and enthusiasm of all students. When asked, not all students knew what targets they are expected to meet this year.

Marking is beginning to show signs of improvement but remains variable. Some teachers mark students' work regularly and make sure they respond to the comments made, but others do not. Not enough is done to reinforce students' writing skills and spelling. Not all teachers insist on good presentation or completion of all work. Older students say they want teachers to check that they understand fully before moving on.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Senior leaders are prioritising improving students' behaviour. There are clear signs that this is leading to improvement. Higher levels of supervision inside the academy and outside at break and lunchtimes make it a much calmer place to be. Students are respectful towards each other and to staff. Daily checks on arrival by pastoral staff are ensuring that students wear the expected uniform and incidents of lateness are reducing. Students recognise the improvements being made and feel that the improved procedures to manage behaviour in lessons are helping them to remain focused on their learning.

In lessons seen by inspectors, students were mostly attentive and eager to learn but their interest waned when teaching failed to capture it. This led to some students not paying enough attention. The academy's on-call system and exclusion room continue to be used often but records show that incidents are reducing. Attendance remains stubbornly low. This presents a significant barrier to raising achievement

and to the removal of special measures. A large team of pastoral managers and support staff responsible for students' welfare are having little impact on increasing overall attendance, especially that of older students.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders are taking responsibility for raising expectations of behaviour and providing a better environment in which to learn. The academy's behaviour framework has been reaffirmed. All staff are expected to follow the clear procedures for managing unacceptable behaviour. Senior leaders are out and about during lessons and break-times to assist staff in managing students' behaviour. Decisive action has been taken to exclude a small minority of students unwilling to conform to the academy's heightened expectations.

A range of staff training has been implemented for all teachers, including the large number of new teachers who joined the academy this term. An associate principal continues to routinely monitor the quality of teaching but at this stage it is too early to gauge the impact of new training on improving the overall quality of teaching, or in assessing how effective newly appointed teachers can contribute towards the academy's improvement.

Not all middle leaders are doing enough to secure improvements to the academy. Senior leaders are not holding them sufficiently to account for the results achieved in their subjects or for the quality of pastoral support they provide. In many subjects results remain far too low. Pastoral staff attend to students' needs and ensure that they are cared for, but they are not routinely monitoring their academic progress, or making sure that they remain fully engaged in learning and are on track to meet the expectations of them.

The inspection report asked the governing body to focus specifically on improving the use of funding to support students eligible for the pupil premium. Results this year show that they are not pursuing this rigorously enough. Following an external review of governance, an improvement plan has been implemented to increase their effectiveness. This is in its early stages and has not yet had a demonstrable impact on improving the academy's performance. Governors recognise the need to engage the full support of parents and carers in helping senior leaders to raise achievement and improve attendance. The single central record remains secure.

The academy leaders and governors are taking suitable action to address the risk of possible radicalisation of students. Initial training has taken place to alert staff to the possible risks and further 'Prevent Training' for staff is planned in conjunction with the local community police. Inspectors found no evidence of low morale among staff. Senior leaders have made plans to survey their views and address any current concerns they may have.

Leaders and managers are not doing enough to monitor the effectiveness of staff in the academy's student support and special educational needs team, the impact of training provided for them or the procedures in place to support students and help the academy to improve.

External support

The good practice within other academies in The Comberton Trust enables the executive principal to draw upon a range of support, in particular the expertise of effective practitioners to work alongside his teachers and managers. The academy's strong links with the local authority enable it to work strategically with other schools and academies in the area.

Further priorities for improvement

- Increase lesson monitoring, the scrutiny of students' work and analysis of progress data to gain a full understanding of the quality of teaching, the impact training is having, and the contribution it is making to raising achievement in all subjects.
- Hold all middle leaders fully accountable for raising the standards achieved in their subjects and for improving students' behaviour and attendance.
- Carry out a detailed, external review of the academy's student support and special educational needs department. This should include an evaluation of the achievement of students supported in the department and others identified as disabled or having special educational needs, the quality of provision in the department and the effectiveness of leadership and management.