

Tribal  
Kings Orchard  
1 Queens Street  
Bristol, BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 0117 311 5307  
Email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com



24 September 2014

Mrs Kate Webster  
Headteacher  
Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School  
High Street  
Barnet  
EN5 5RR

Dear Mrs Webster

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School**

Following my visit to your academy on 23 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 March 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- include more checkpoints in the academy development plan so that all leaders and governors test regularly how well the academy is improving
- ensure all governors contribute to examining the progress of different student groups and ask even more penetrating questions about how quickly gaps are closing.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your senior leaders, six heads of department and members of the Governing Body including the Chair. The academy development plans were evaluated. I reviewed minutes of governing body meetings, information about students' achievement, records about safeguarding and your

monitoring of teaching. We visited lessons together to observe behaviour, look at students' books and briefly observe teaching.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection you have restructured the roles and responsibilities of your deputy and assistant headteachers. You have appointed two new substantive senior leaders, one for inclusion and one for staffing. Four newly qualified teachers joined the academy in September 2014. Since the last full inspection, 14 staff have left the academy.

## **Main findings**

You, your senior leaders and governors have responded with urgency to the areas requiring improvement. You are making sure that all leaders understand how their specific responsibilities for improving the academy link directly to the priorities in the development plan. You and your governors are making it very clear to leaders what they should and can achieve in tight timescales. The academy development plan includes all the areas requiring improvement from the recent inspection and some checkpoints to evaluate progress of leaders work. During my visit, I recommended that the checkpoints in the plan should be more frequent and include more even data about students' progress. There are improved systems for evaluating achievement data and this is giving a clear picture of where gaps remain. Middle leaders are becoming more confident using data in discussions with their teaching teams. The impact of this is quicker challenge to teachers and, as a whole team, more comprehensive discussion about girls' progress by ethnicity, vulnerable students and those with specific needs.

Leaders work to improve teaching is showing tangible results. More teaching is becoming consistently good and students' progress is improving. The percentage of students making accelerated progress in mathematics in 2014 shows early impact of improvement work. More able students do not always do as well as they could in English. There remain areas of weakness in some students work because expectations of what students should achieve are too low. Others have very high expectations and are pushing students much harder. Leaders are working purposefully with all staff to insist on higher expectations. Middle leaders are starting to challenge weak practice more confidently by working together across departments. They are checking how best to give critical and constructive feedback to staff to improve teaching and check that their expectations as leaders are comparable.

Through increased scrutiny of students' work and more joint observations of teaching, you have identified where the best and weaker practice exists. From this improved monitoring of teaching, leaders have a more robust picture about which professional training sessions to use with particular staff to help them improve. Your 'professional learning teams' (PLTS) and 'skills on show' (SOW) sessions are

providing time for staff to resolve problems and test out new ideas. In particular, leaders, teachers and support assistants are grappling with how to narrow the remaining achievement gaps of those students supported through the pupil premium funding and differences in the achievement of students with special educational needs. Marking for understanding and deepening subject knowledge as part of the professional training sessions, is beginning to improve marking. The new marking policy sets high expectations for teachers and students but this is not secure in all subjects.

The information from the external review and your own internal analysis has helped leaders understand how best to use the pupil premium funding. There is now a robust system for monitoring how the money is spent and your deputy headteacher is helping leaders, and staff to understand the targets for closing achievement gaps rapidly. There is better use of data to evaluate the progress of specific groups of students who benefit from pupil premium funding. Tackling the underperformance of White British students supported by pupil premium funding is an urgent priority.

The external review by a National Leader of Governance (NLG) has raised governors' awareness of the need to draw tight links between data about student achievement, attendance and the quality of teaching over time. The restructuring of the committees and reduction in size of the governing body, has brought greater clarity to the role of each committee, especially in analysing how well leaders assess teaching. Governors are asking questions that are more demanding about teaching in each subject department and how well middle leaders are dealing with weaker practice. The level of challenge is improving strongly and leaders confirm that governors are more robust in their questioning.

Governors are developing a clearer understanding of how the pupil premium funding is supporting eligible students. Using achievement data, they are beginning to examine how quickly gaps are closing and are starting to scrutinise data beyond the headline data. Their understanding of nationally expected rates of progress is developing but is not yet secure enough in assessing this in sufficient depth, especially looking from starting points and the final grades that students are achieving. As a result of leaders work to improve the accuracy and presentation of data, governors are becoming more familiar with how to identify patterns in achievement and attendance data. The minutes of meetings do not do justice to the more challenging debate between leaders and governors.

Governors are not complacent. They are seeking to further their training, links with other academies and support from the local authority, to strengthen governance further.

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**

Leaders are using expertise from other academy's to strengthen leadership and ensure middle leaders can see practice elsewhere to develop better teaching and their leadership work. Governors are using resources from the National Governors Association (NGA) and work with the NLG from an academy in St Albans, to improve their work. There are good links with the local authority to support vulnerable students.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Barnet.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**