

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 6799163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com



9 October 2014

Tracey Newton
Garden City Academy
Radburn Way
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 2JZ

Dear Ms Newton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Garden City Academy

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

With the support of governors and the multi-academy trust you are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- provide clear and measurable indicators of success in your development plan so that progress can be monitored accurately
- ensure that the evaluation of actions, including interventions, is focussed on the impact on pupils' progress
- improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that pupils are given opportunities to respond to teachers' feedback
 - carrying out work scrutiny to highlight areas of good practice and identify weakness
 - introducing measures to share good practice.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive headteacher and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the academy's sponsor. The academy improvement plan and a range of key documents, including the new marking and behaviour policies, were evaluated. Accompanied by you and the executive headteacher I spent time in a wide range of lessons looking at pupils' work, examples of teachers' marking and pupils' behaviour. We also looked at records of reading.

Context

The headteacher retired at the end of the last academic year and you were appointed as the acting headteacher in September. Since the last inspection two teachers have left and the academy has appointed four new teachers, three of whom are newly qualified. The academy's sponsor has appointed an executive headteacher.

Main findings

Your appointment, and that of the executive headteacher, is leading to rapid change. You both have the confidence and backing of governors and the highly-committed staff. With the support of the academy sponsor and new executive headteacher, you have taken swift action to focus on the areas for improvement from the last inspection. While your improvement plan is detailed, it does not always identify what impact actions will have on the progress of pupils. In addition, some of the milestones are not clear enough which means it will be difficult for you to know when actions have been effective.

The staff are quickly putting in place strategies to improve their practice especially in the area of behaviour management. The academy has a new behaviour policy based on support and praise which all staff and pupils understand, and which is used consistently through the school. This was evident on our walk around academy when very little low-level or off-task behaviour was observed, unlike at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are eager to please and were keen to show what they had learned.

The introduction of a range of interventions, including a nurture base to support pupils in their learning, is having a positive impact. Pupils say they are gaining from the support provided. However, the schools does not currently have a clear understanding of which interventions are having the most positive impact on pupils' progress.

Staff have re-organised the learning area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is now a positive and welcoming environment. Improvements continue to be made to the outside learning space for these children. The addition of water and sand play are widening their learning experiences. The learning journals for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage show pupils are making good progress.

Parents are encouraged to make additions to their child's learning journal through 'wow' moments, recording their child's achievement in a wider context. This parental engagement is very positive.

You have good systems in place to monitor teaching but the scrutiny of pupils' work is less systematic. Marking in the Year 2 and 3 classes is good. Pupils, in these classes, are getting clear feedback on what they need to do to improve their work. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils are not always given enough opportunity and time to respond to teachers' guidance and therefore its impact is limited.

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

The school values the support that it receives from the sponsor who are currently supporting the school in a range of ways, including the development of leadership in the school. The work with another school in the academy trust has commenced and is viewed as being of mutual benefit.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire and the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector