

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 679 9146
Direct email: clare.benson@serco.com



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Kam Grewal-Joy
Parkside Community School
Boythorpe Avenue
Boythorpe
Chesterfield, Derbyshire
S40 2NS

Dear Mrs Grewal-Joy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Parkside Community School

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection.

The school should take immediate action to:

- increase the rates of progress being made by all students, particularly in mathematics, history, design and technology, French and music
- establish effective and substantive leadership of the mathematics department
- ensure the performance management system for teachers links directly to the achievement of student groups

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, an assistant headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and considered a new school self-evaluation document. You took me on a tour of the school and we saw the learning that took place in several classrooms.

Context

Eight teachers have left the school since the last monitoring visit in October 2013. These include the heads of the English and mathematics departments. Five teachers have joined the school including a new head of English.

Main findings

Levels of achievement of the Year 11 students who left the school in the summer declined when compared to the previous year, based on the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Only 35% of students achieved this measure, although there was a very slight increase in the proportion of students achieving GCSEs in both English and mathematics at A*-C without three other good GCSEs in addition to them. This level of achievement is below the minimum expectations set by the government. You and your colleagues have much work to do to ensure that achievement improves to a level whereby the school can be judged to be good.

Standards in mathematics are a particular concern. Student achievement in this subject area was low at the time of the last monitoring visit and it has declined, particularly for those students who are eligible for pupil premium funding. This is because of inadequate teaching over time. However, four of the five teachers of mathematics left the school in the summer; the remaining teacher, in an acting capacity, is leading a department of teachers who are new to the school. It is absolutely essential that you establish permanent and effective leadership of this subject area as soon as possible.

Underachievement at GCSE level was apparent in several subject areas in 2014. You have identified that a significant factor in this was that students were inadequately prepared in terms of examination techniques. You have directed individual teachers to address this; all pupils in the school now undertake some form of assessment every half-term in all subjects, with a view to improving their ability to succeed in examination tasks.

Students' progress in English improved significantly in 2014. While only half of the students made the progress expected of them, this is much better when compared to the previous year. You have entered students for core science examinations more

carefully than in the past and this has resulted in improved outcomes. Vertical tutor groups were in place at the time of the last monitoring visit; you have changed these to year groups in order to find more time to focus on making progress, particularly through developing necessary study skills. It is too early to judge the impact of this change.

You have given a much more prominent place in the school to homework; it is set very regularly and senior leaders have developed a 'zero tolerance' approach on non-completion.

You acknowledge that you were previously not judging the quality of teaching rigorously enough. One-off lesson observations carried too much importance and pupil outcomes were not considered. You have now addressed this, though you still need to refine your performance management system in terms of linking teaching quality with the achievement of groups, particularly those students eligible for pupil premium funding. Further, the changes to your systems for judging the quality of teaching should have been made much earlier. You judge that teaching has improved in the school through a combination of staffing changes and by some teachers improving their practice via the school's coaching programme. However, it is not yet at a level to ensure good outcomes for students. The quality of teachers' marking has improved since the previous monitoring visit.

You and your colleagues have taken great steps to raise the expectations of students and parents. You use home-school agreements effectively to hold people to account for their actions. The implementation of the revised behaviour policy, and particularly the use of same-day detention, has resulted in a decline in poor behaviour and an improvement in the climate for learning. This has also been helped by a revised set of rewards which you and your colleagues created in consultation with students. Students feel that the school has improved very recently; many have a renewed sense of pride, partly reflected in the positive attitude to changes in the uniform policy. The number of students on roll in Year 7 has increased by almost 20% when compared with 2013 which reflects a more positive perception in the local community.

Although attendance has improved slowly over the last two years, you accept that this remains an area for improvement. You have appointed two 'attendance community liaison officers' who are rigorous in conducting home visits. This has only been underway for a matter of weeks though positive impact is emerging. You invite parents into school to discuss the attendance of their children when it becomes a concern; you offer support for families when it is necessary.

You re-structured the leadership team with effect from September 2014. This has led to a greater sharing of responsibility in terms of holding teachers to account for the achievement of their students. Middle leaders, some of whom are new in post, now have this as part of their roles. Job descriptions have been re-written to make student progress central to all leaders' roles. Though it is too early to judge the

impact of these changes, it is clear that a focus on student progress is now central to the activities of all members of staff.

Four governors have joined the governing body since the last monitoring visit; two governors have left. Governors were very disappointed with the underachievement of the Year 11 students who left the school in the summer. Although governors were offering challenge and support to senior leaders over the previous academic year, they are determined to hold members of staff to account more closely this year. The Chair of the Governing Body meets the headteacher regularly to discuss the progress being made against actions in the school improvement plan. Communication between individual governors is good; records of meetings are circulated widely and governors are asked to outline any concerns which are then followed up with members of staff. In line with senior leaders' policies on improving parental engagement, governors have established an informal 'parent community group' which invites parents to air their views. This has resulted in governors becoming more informed about parental concerns and made them more able to act on them.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority representative knows the school very well and offers effective support and challenge. School-to-school support has ensured that teachers are much more accurate when assessing students' work. Local authority representatives make a substantial contribution to the school's coaching programme which has led to some improvements in the quality of teaching. Local authority representatives have conducted reviews of the history and English departments which have helped to inform senior leaders on how to most effectively improve student outcomes in these areas. A review of the use of pupil premium funding has very recently been conducted by the local authority representative, but it is too early to judge the impact of this.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector