

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 9161
Direct email: ann.morris@serco.com



27 November 2014

Mr Colin Boxall
Principal
Grace Academy Coventry
Wigston Road
Coventry
CV2 2RH

Dear Mr Boxall

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grace Academy Coventry

Following my visit with Helen Reeves, Associate Inspector and Timothy McGuire, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 25–26 November 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 school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were 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 not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

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 Education Funding Agency, the Academies Advisers Unit, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Coventry.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy so that it is good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teaching motivates and inspires students
 - providing training for temporary teachers to improve their subject knowledge and skills, and ensure that they are well-prepared for their lessons
 - raising expectations of how students behave and what they can achieve
 - ensuring teachers give students opportunities to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in interesting contexts in a range of subjects
 - making sure that students' work is marked in a way that gives them clear guidance about how it can be improved.

- Improve behaviour and reduce the number of students who are temporarily excluded from school by ensuring that all staff understand and consistently apply the academy's expectations for good behaviour.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the systems for collecting, analysing and acting on data about students' progress are consistently applied across the academy
 - spending of additional government funding (pupil premium) is used effectively to raise the attainment of those pupils it is intended to support
 - staffing is stabilised so that students have greater continuity in their learning
 - all leaders are rigorously held to account for the performance of all groups of students so that they are able to drive forward improvements in teaching, learning and behaviour
 - courses offered to sixth-form students meet their academic needs
 - governors regularly and rigorously hold academy leaders to account for all aspects of performance and check that actions taken are leading to improvements.

- An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25-26 November 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors observed students' learning in 29 lessons. A range of subjects were seen. Three lessons were jointly observed with members of the academy leadership team. Meetings were held with the Principal, academy leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the sponsor, The Grace Foundation. Discussions were held with students, members of staff and parents. The views of parents were noted from the 27 responses to Parent View. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the academy's analysis of students' current attainment and progress, monitoring records of the quality of teaching undertaken by academy leaders, and the minutes of the local governing body and the Academy Improvement Monitoring Board. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including information about students' attendance and punctuality and the vetting checks on staff new to the academy.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2014, four teachers have left the academy and 15 teachers have joined. The academy leadership team has been restructured and areas of responsibility redistributed. The former Principal of Grace Academy Darlaston has joined the academy as an education adviser.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Lesson observations, work in students' books and the academy's own records confirm that attainment and progress remain inadequate for the majority of students in the academy. The GCSE results of students who left the academy at the end of Year 11 in 2014 were below average in English and mathematics. Students did not make the progress expected of them in these subjects. Based on their unvalidated 2014 results, the academy does not meet the government's 2013 floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

Information provided by the academy shows that the progress of students across all year groups is slow, particularly in English, mathematics and science.

Students' progress in mathematics is poor. The progress of disadvantaged students, those who are disabled or have special educational needs and the more-able is inadequate. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students in the academy and nationally, while closing, is wide in mathematics. Students' mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding are weak across all year groups.

Students' progress in English, while improving at the end of Year 11, is poor. More-able students are making better progress in Years 10 and 11. However, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs do not make the progress expected of them. As a result, the gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students in the academy and nationally, while closing, is wide in this subject.

Students' literacy skills are weak. The average reading-age of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 is below age-related expectations. Information provided by the academy shows that there is no significant improvement in students' reading ability year on year. Students have few opportunities to write for extended lengths of time in subjects other than English. As a consequence, students' writing skills are weak.

Students' work in books is often poorly presented, inaccurate and incomplete. There is insufficient development of students' knowledge over time, particularly in mathematics, science and English.

The quality of teaching

Weaknesses in learning and teaching highlighted at the inspection in January 2014 remain. As a result, students' progress is poor. Although some aspects of teaching have improved, these are not yet substantial or consistent enough to ensure students make the progress expected of them.

Teachers' expectations of what students know, can do and achieve are low. The work in students' books shows that many teachers accept poorly presented and incomplete work. Students told inspectors that the work they are set is often uninspiring and does not encourage them to think or to reflect on and apply what they have learnt. Teachers do not use the information they have about students' abilities or gaps in learning to plan and deliver work that improves their knowledge and understanding. Students said that they are often unclear about what it is they are learning. Many teachers do not check that students understand the work. As a consequence, students' misconceptions are not challenged or corrected.

Weaknesses in teachers' marking limit how quickly students make progress. Teachers do not follow up errors in students' work or identify how work can be improved. As a result, students often repeat the same mistakes or are unable to move on to work that is more difficult.

Students do not have sufficient opportunities to read, write or apply their mathematical skills in a range of subjects. As a consequence, students' literacy and numeracy skills are not improving.

Students' attitudes to learning are poor. Inspectors witnessed students shouting out, refusing to work or follow instructions. Teachers are often unable to deliver lessons

as they would wish due to students' disruptive behaviour. Many teachers do not challenge students' poor behaviour or work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Poor behaviour evident at the time of the inspection in January 2014 remains. As a result, parents and staff continue to have concerns about students' behaviour.

The management of students' behaviour remains weak. Teachers' low expectations of students' capabilities contribute to inappropriate behaviour in lessons. The work in students' books is often of poor quality. Teachers do not challenge this. As a result, students' progress is poor.

Staff do not consistently apply the academy's behaviour policy. For example, students told inspectors that they use their mobile phones in and out of lessons to take photographs even though this is against academy rules. Staff told inspectors that they do not feel supported by academy leaders in tackling incidents of poor behaviour.

Students are rude and disrespectful to staff and frequently use foul, abusive and derogatory language. Younger students told inspectors that older students are often unkind to them. As a result, they do not feel safe in the academy.

Students' behaviour around the academy is often boisterous. Students have to be regularly reminded and encouraged to move to their next lesson.

Approaches to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions have been successful and there have been fewer exclusions this term than at the same time last year.

Leaders have implemented strategies to improve students' attendance. As a result, attendance is improving and is now above average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Actions taken by academy leaders have not resulted in significant and sustained improvements in achievement, the quality of learning and teaching, and students' behaviour. Staff and parents express concerns about how well the academy is led and managed. Many staff are particularly concerned about the lack of support from leaders in dealing with students' poor behaviour.

Leaders at all levels have not been able to demonstrate sufficient capability for sustaining improvements against the planned actions. The introduction of the commercial system to track students' progress, for example, has not ensured teachers are informed about what students need to know and do. As a consequence, many teachers do not plan lessons that improve students' learning. The launch of

this system with parents, planned for October 2014, is at least a month behind schedule. As a result, parents are not informed about their child's progress as leaders had intended.

Systems recently introduced to monitor, evaluate and review the work of the academy are not used consistently across subjects. As a result, students' progress, particularly that of the more-able and those who are disabled or have special educational needs, is not adequately tracked. Actions to tackle students' weak literacy skills have not been fully implemented or successful. As a consequence, students do not have enough opportunities to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects. One-to-one and small group work to help students improve their reading skills are not thoroughly evaluated. Leaders, therefore, do not have an accurate picture of the interventions that are most effective.

Governance remains weak. Governors' expectations of how rapidly improvements need to take place are too low. They show insufficient urgency to drive improvement. The spending of the pupil premium grant (additional government funding to support disadvantaged students), for example, is not used effectively in raising standards for students eligible for this grant. Governors have not checked that the generic Grace Foundation safeguarding policy appropriately informs leaders' actions in keeping students safe at Grace Academy Coventry.

Leaders have appointed more permanent staff across a range of subjects and reduced the number of supply and temporary teachers. Students said that having the same teacher, for example in science, has caused less disruption to their learning.

Sixth form students in Year 12 told inspectors that the information, advice and guidance they received in Year 11 helped them to choose courses appropriate to their abilities and aspirations. However, the number of students returning to Year 13 in September was low.

External support

The impact of the support provided by Sponne School and Lode Heath School has been limited. Students do not make the progress expected of them and leaders have not secured the necessary improvement in the quality of learning and teaching and in students' behaviour. Monitoring visits to evaluate the work of the academy are carried out by staff employed by The Grace Foundation but have not accurately assessed the academy's progress. As a consequence, the review failed to identify the actions necessary to speed up students' progress and to improve their behaviour and literacy and numeracy skills.