

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 9165
Direct email: victoria.mortimore2@serco.com



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Mr I McArthur
Headteacher
Paulet High School
Violet Way
Stapenhill
Burton-on-Trent
DE15 9RT

Dear Mr McArthur

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Paulet High School

Following my visit to your school on 23 January 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the head teacher, other senior leaders, students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Short visits were made to several lessons, and these included brief reviews of pupils' work. Documents including notes of local authority monitoring visits, the review of the use of Pupil Premium, and examples of current performance management evidence were examined.

Context

The head teacher and deputy head teacher have been appointed to the permanent positions since the previous inspection.

Main findings

School senior leaders have used the recent inspection findings to galvanise improvement. A short but evaluative school development plan contains sufficient measurable milestones to track progress. Threading through the plan are actions to improve the progress of less able pupils, and disadvantaged pupils. The key development actions are:

- Personalised learning plans, for every class highlighting specific learning needs of individual students, and recording actions needed for the next lesson as a result of ongoing teacher assessment. These are available in each class, although their consistent use to drive differentiation is not yet embedded.
- A range of effective partnerships with other schools, providing bespoke training and development of teachers, middle and senior leaders.
- Detailed and regular data analysis, driving short term intervention but also bringing to the fore very high expectations that all students should make expected progress from their starting point. Most pupils are targeted to exceed this 'expected' progress measure in order to attain at least average standards from below average starting points.
- Clear evidence of a positive impact on learning and achievement as a result of targeted support, in reading and in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 3.
- A whole school focus on improving speaking, and extending the writing skills of students.
- Professional development for teachers on improving their 'questioning' skills.
- Driven in part by the external review of Pupil Premium, the school has delivered a proactive 'Commit to Success' charter involving disadvantaged students and their parents. It includes staff outreach to these families in their community with a clear pledge of specific support by the school, and actions that parents can take in return. This is backed up by financial support for students, as well as additional teaching activities including after school and at weekends.
- A 25% increase in teaching time for sixth form subjects.
- Timetabled and staffed sixth form study sessions, including an expectation that students participate regularly; their attendance is monitored at these sessions and leads to financial rewards over time.
- Governor focus days, involving governors visiting the school to review a particular improvement strand.

In the small sample of lessons seen, most marking and feedback was clear, personalised to each student effectively, and up to date. In some cases, less able students were not expected to write nearly as much, or in a imaginative way, compared to their more able colleagues, because of over-use of structured

worksheets. In a few examples, teachers' use of questions did not give students opportunities to explain their understanding.

External support

The support from the local authority has been swift, multi-layered and very well targeted to meet the range of professional development needs of the school. It is based on several local partnerships with good or outstanding schools, and has been instrumental in setting an appropriately urgent tone, coupled to demonstrating long-term confidence in the capacity of the school to further improve.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector