

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 9164
Direct email: tim.ogbourn@serco.com



19 January 2015

Mr Douglas Lawson
Executive Principal
The Basildon Upper Academy
Wickford Avenue
Basildon
SS13 3HL

Dear Mr Lawson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Basildon Upper Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 January 2015, 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 December 2013. 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 school should take further action to:

- increase the consistency of teaching so that more is outstanding, but over time, all is at least good

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive principal, senior leaders, students, the Chair of the Governing Body representing the sponsor and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Short visits were made to a range of lessons. School documentation and examples of students' work were checked.

Context

Your predecessor left the academy at the end of the last academic year. You became the executive principal in September 2014. The previous inspection removed the academy from special measures. At that time, inspectors judged the academy's overall effectiveness to require improvement because the recent improvements in teaching had not had sufficient time to have a positive impact on raising students' achievement. Behaviour, safety, leadership and management were judged to be good. You, with senior leaders and governors requested this monitoring inspection.

Main findings

Leaders have worked extremely hard and have seen the huge improvements in the school over the last two years. You are building on this so that your senior leadership team is even sharper in challenging the academy's provision. Improvements reported at the last inspection were insufficiently rapid to have as positive an impact on the summer 2014 Year 11 results as was hoped for. This is largely because the legacy of underachievement and gaps in the curriculum could not be adequately addressed in the time available.

Your action plan rightly addresses the areas for improvement in the previous inspection report and the rate of improvement has been accelerated. For example you, with senior leaders, have improved the approach to assessing the quality of teaching, so that you now monitor not only what the teacher does in a lesson, but students' progress and the quality of work in books.

The use of assessment has become much more incisive in having a positive impact on students' progress. Considerable rigour has been added to regular assessment points. Gaps in students' understanding of concepts in a variety of subjects are identified and these areas are targeted for extra support. You showed me the positive impact of the interventions. Students receiving the extra support and sixth form students involved in providing it spoke positively about the process.

You have created greater coherence between the lower and upper academies so that the Key Stage 3 curriculum in the lower academy provides a better foundation for students when they reach Key Stage 4 in the upper academy. The previous lack of progression between the two academies contributed significantly to the low attainment in last summer's examinations. However, this improvement will take several years to have its full impact. While the academy was in special measures, leaders were warned that focussing on English and mathematics at the expense of other subjects would jeopardise students' chances of gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C. This was reflected in the summer 2014 results. You recognise the need to provide support for students to gain qualifications in a variety of subjects and the continuing need to put in extra support at Key Stage 4 until improvements in the lower academy feed through.

External support

At the time of the previous inspection, the academy made very good use of external support. Since then, some of it has been cut back in response to the recognition of expertise within the academy. In other areas it has expanded. For example senior and middle leaders are following professional development programmes relevant to their leadership roles. A national school development programme is used to provide extra rigour to internal assessments. This programme provides regular opportunities for subject leaders to bring ideas for improvement back to the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]