

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T:** 0121 679 9158  
**Direct email:** rachel.dayan@serco.com



Mr J Bradshaw  
Interim Principal  
James Brindley School  
Bell Barn Road  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 2AF

Dear Mr Bradshaw

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of James Brindley School**

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 2015, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Interim Principal, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a range of leaders and staff. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

The substantive Principal and the three vice-principals were absent from the academy during the monitoring inspection. A consultant senior leader has joined the school on a temporary basis to assist you with implementing the action plan.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

There have already been a number of positive changes in the academy since the section 5 inspection. You have rightly placed a strong emphasis on developing consistency in systems, structures, expectations and outcomes across the academy. The seven assistant principals who are heads of the different sectors have each taken on the leadership of a whole-school responsibility, such as safeguarding or

teaching and learning. This is allowing them to see where inconsistencies and weaknesses lie and to develop ways to put these right, as well as discovering and building on the good practice that exists in many aspects of the academy's work. Leaders and staff I spoke to during the inspection were enthusiastic about the areas of the action plan which they were leading or to which they were contributing. All provided evidence of the valuable changes made so far as well as some initial impact. Staff are beginning to be involved more systematically in contributing to improvement across the academy, for example through whole staff meetings and discussion groups. Focus groups for various areas of the action plan are being organised.

You and the Chair of Governors very sensibly made the issues around safeguarding a priority and have acted swiftly and effectively to improve the most urgent aspects. Clear expectations have been set for how attendance will be recorded each morning and how it will be followed up, and a tracking system has been adopted by all the main teaching centres. As a result, absence is being challenged more quickly and recorded more thoroughly. Centre leaders can now act more quickly where concerns arise. Combined with good input from the pastoral support worker, these new procedures are resulting in improvements in attendance for a number of individual pupils. You have clarified the processes for making safeguarding referrals. The new leader of this aspect has begun to take a series of appropriate actions to improve processes for recording and reporting concerns, and for developing staff's knowledge and understanding. The safeguarding policy is in the process of being rewritten to make it more applicable to your setting.

You have taken seriously the issues raised in the section 5 report about the part-time provision that too many pupils are receiving. A series of meetings have been arranged with senior health professionals to discuss the best way to meet both the educational and health needs of the pupils who attend the specialist provisions. A review of the Pathways provision has taken place and various solutions have been posed. Importantly, these emphasise the need for the provision to be much more flexible so pupils can come to school full time whenever they are well enough. There are some funding implications which you are in the process of discussing with the local authority.

Further in-house analysis of achievement has shown that some of the assessment information is not wholly accurate and is often not moderated. The consultant leader is working on these issues and is developing new assessment and tracking systems. He and the leader responsible for teaching and learning are also working with staff on appropriate ways to set aspirational targets for all pupils, whether they spend a long or a short time at James Brindley. Mathematics and English leaders have previously had little time allocated to lead their subjects across the academy and you are allocating them a more appropriate amount of time to do this from September.

Some important new appointments have been made to the academy to support the implementation of the action plan, including three more pastoral support workers and a business manager. You have also appointed a manager who is responsible for supporting leaders to analyse and track a range of key aspects such as attendance and safeguarding.

The governing body has commissioned an external review of governance, as recommended in the section 5 inspection report, and this is underway. Since the inspection five new governors have joined, bringing a range of skills and expanding the governing body to a size that allows it to do more of the necessary work. Careful thought has been given to how governors can gain a more in-depth insight into the effectiveness of each centre and initial plans are sensible. Governors have broad areas of responsibility for the action plan and a monitoring group has been set up to meet on a monthly basis. However, governors do not yet have detailed plans for how they will monitor and evaluate each aspect. An initial spot check by governors of how well the new attendance procedures were working was useful and revealed both strengths and aspects that needed further work. Governors agree that more of this kind of monitoring needs to take place in a systematic way in order both to challenge and to support the academy.

The academy is seeking appropriate external support and challenge. A new school improvement partner began working with the academy in December and quickly identified aspects that needed improvement. His subsequent visit resulted in well-focused advice on ensuring that the action plan is effective in moving the academy forward. External reviews of English and mathematics have taken place. These have helpfully and clearly analysed the weaknesses that exist in assessment and tracking, including the accuracy and use of assessment at GCSE level and the weaknesses in moderation. Recommendations are clear and relevant. Sensibly, you also intend to seek external support to monitor and evaluate aspects of the action plan.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The proprietor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

They cover the key areas of the report well. The action plan does not clearly specify the monitoring and evaluation process, but from our discussions and the evidence you showed me I am satisfied that you have clear plans for this crucial aspect and that monitoring and evaluation activities have already begun. We discussed the importance of noting the monitoring and evaluation activities on the written plan to ensure that they are clear to all stakeholders and that all relevant people are held to account for taking effective action in the areas for which they are responsible. Governors understand that they need to work out exactly how they will monitor and evaluate the plan's effectiveness.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint NQTs. I recommend that no more than three are appointed.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of the Governing Body  
cc. Local authority  
cc. The Secretary of State