

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

8 May 2015

Ms Evelyn Forde
Principal
Ely College
Downham Road
Ely
CB6 2SH

Dear Ms Forde

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ely College

Following my visit to your academy on 7 May 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 February 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, two interim Vice-Principals, the Consultant Principal, and the Education Director for the CfBT Schools Trust, who also sits on the Rapid Improvement Board. I evaluated academy documentation, discussed pupil performance data and also evaluated the academy and the Trust's statement of action. I also toured the academy with you and visited a number lessons to observe teaching and learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes at the academy. The Principal and the two Vice-Principals resigned from their posts at the end of the Spring term, 2015. You took up your post in April 2015, along with two interim Vice-Principals. CfBT Schools Trust, which has responsibility for the performance of the

academy, dissolved the governing body in March 2015 and replaced it with a Rapid Improvement Board. During this transitional period you are being supported by a Consultant Principal, who works at the academy for three days each week.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Following the previous inspection, the Trust took immediate action to address the weaknesses that were identified. A new leadership team is now in place and is quickly gaining an understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses.

You have wasted no time in working with other school leaders to identify the actions that are required to improve outcomes for students. You have prioritised the need to simplify systems for checking on the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that all members of staff understand their role in raising standards at the academy. You have already begun to consult on changes to the way that senior and middle leaders will operate in future.

You share the concerns, expressed at the previous inspection, about the amount of teaching time that is being lost when students are removed from class following incidents of poor behaviour. Procedures for dealing with such incidents have been reviewed and improved systems are now in place to monitor behaviour that lead to students being removed from class. Records show that the number of students being sent out of the class has reduced this term. During this inspection, students' conduct, in classrooms and around academy, was exemplary.

During the brief time you have been at the academy you have begun work to improve communication with parents. You have held two meetings with parents, during which you have provided an update on recent developments and shared your vision for the future of the academy. You have also reviewed safeguarding practices in the light of issues identified at the previous inspection. Some concerns remain but these are being addressed as a matter of urgency.

The Trust has increased the support it provides to the academy. It has recently commissioned reviews of mathematics and safeguarding. This has helped academy leaders to gain an understanding of some of the academy's strengths and weaknesses in these key areas.

The governing body has recently been replaced by a Rapid Improvement Board. However, this body has not yet met. Consequently, the review of governance and the academy's use of the pupil premium, which were recommended at the last inspection, have not yet taken place.

Other areas for improvement, arising from the inspection, have been addressed in a combined statement of action and academy improvement plan. However, due to the concerns about the reliability of the academy's assessment data, this plan is not yet fit for purpose as it does not provide sufficient detail about how the planned actions will improve pupils' achievement. Nor does it provide other clear measures in order to enable academy leaders to establish whether or not actions have been successful.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The proprietor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The academy's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint NQTs.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Rapid Improvement Board, the Director of Children's Services for Cambridge and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

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