

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

20 May 2015

Shanaz Khan
Headteacher
Small Heath School
Muntz Street
Small Heath
Birmingham
B10 9RX

Dear Mrs Khan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Small Heath School

Following my visit to your school on 19 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. I would like to thank your staff for the help they gave me during the inspection and for the time they made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

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

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and one other member, a range of middle leaders, teachers and support staff, the headteacher of King Edward VI Five Ways School, and a representative of the local authority. I briefly visited classes on each of the school sites. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. Responses from 92 staff questionnaires were also considered.

Context

The headteacher is currently on sickness absence from school. The headteacher from King Edward VI Five Ways School is providing support to the senior leaders and she started this on 6 May 2015. Since the last inspection, a deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher have resigned. One of the substantive assistant headteachers is working as an acting deputy headteacher. An assistant headteacher

joined the school on 1 April 2015 with a specific responsibility for special educational needs. The IEB replaced the governing body and met for the first time on 17 April 2015. Members of three teaching professional associations took one day of industrial action on 12 May 2015. There are nine teaching vacancies for September 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

This school is in a very fragile state. There have been limited improvements since the last inspection. The instability that exists in the leadership of the school is a considerable barrier to the rapid improvements that are needed to provide students with a good quality of education.

Staff describe a decline in the behaviour of students and the school's records show that there has been an increase in poor behaviour. Six students have been permanently excluded since January 2015.

The headteacher does not have the confidence of staff. There is discord among senior leaders, with some of them also not having the support of their colleagues. The large majority of staff who responded to the questionnaire believed that the school was not well led or managed. Subject leaders, and some senior leaders, feel disenfranchised. This is because they do not feel that their views have been taken into account. Subject leaders described to me that they have had no involvement in devising the plans for how the school is going to improve. Leaders have not gathered a coherent picture of the strengths of teaching, to enable them to share this more widely, as well as the weaknesses that need to be tackled through support and challenge. This is because a culture of trust is not well established to allow for the productive monitoring of the quality of teaching.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose, and this reflects the lack of strategic direction of the school. The plan addresses the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and revisions that have been made recently mean that there are some improvements to the plan. However, the criteria for judging progress toward improvements are imprecise and it is unclear which leaders will be checking and evaluating the impact of this work. The plan does not include targets for the achievement of different groups of students. Very recently, leaders have reviewed progress against the actions identified and their evaluation confirms that there has been little improvement in the school's work. The recently appointed assistant headteacher with responsibility for special educational needs agreed that an external review of the school's work in this area is needed as there have been limited improvements.

Some members of staff are attributing the school's decline only to changes implemented this academic year. However, the systems, processes and structures in place previously had not ensured that students' achievement at the end of Year 11 in 2014 was any better than inadequate. Senior leaders have raised expectations and increased subject leaders' understanding of national accountability measures. They have provided workshops for subject leaders and teachers on effective use of data to improve teaching and students' achievement. To date, these have not had a significant impact. Leaders, teachers and support staff want to improve students' experiences and are passionate about the school, and this was overwhelmingly reflected in the responses to the staff questionnaire. However, a barrier to the rapid progress that is needed has been that leaders at a range of levels have not collectively shared the responsibility for establishing and implementing changes that are required. Leaders have also not ensured that the whole school community understands the vision for improvement and the role that teachers and support staff must take to realise that vision.

Leaders are tackling a potential deficit in the school's budget and this financial uncertainty has added to the fragility of the school's position. The previous governing body had initially approved a first budget plan for this financial year showing a £200,000 deficit. A second plan had been drafted showing a reduction in the deficit to £123,000. A number of options are being explored to make cost savings. For example, asking staff to make a contribution to their lunch if they are not on duty could reduce the current cost by between £40,000 and £50,000 per year. Members of the IEB are also reviewing the spending of the pupil premium funding to ensure that it is having the greatest impact and is providing value for money.

The staff I spoke to were unanimous in saying that very recent improvements to staff morale were linked directly to the approach taken by the headteacher of King Edward VI Five Ways School who has been providing leadership support. Many staff also expressed confidence in the IEB. Members of the IEB have a suitable range of expertise and have quickly got a measure of what needs to be done, as well as the strengths of the school's work that can be built upon. For example, members have identified that a number of staff are undertaking roles with additional responsibilities for which job descriptions do not exist.

The local authority acted decisively to establish an IEB and has provided a high level of support to the school. The linked School Improvement Adviser has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, and local authority officers have established a regular monitoring cycle to support and challenge school leaders.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham local authority and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector