

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 9167
Direct email: farhan.aslam@serco.com



12 June 2015

Mr Trevor Lawn
Headteacher
Alec Hunter Academy
Stubbs Lane
Braintree
CM7 3NR

Dear Mr Lawn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Alec Hunter Academy

Following my visit to your school on 11 June 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 March 2015. 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 ensure that all teachers:

- ensure that key pieces of assessed work are appropriately challenging, and that robust and rigorous checks on the accuracy of the marks applied to it are in place
- use their monitoring information about what students know and can do to plan activities that will enable them to catch up, or move forward rapidly
- provide students with precise feedback so that they know how to improve, particularly in science.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of both the local authority and the

Saffron Academy Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I made brief visits to a number of lessons and looked at the way teachers give pupils feedback about their work. I evaluated the academy's improvement plans and documents relating to the outcomes of monitoring activities.

Context

Several teachers have left the academy since the previous inspection.

Main findings

You are ensuring that both senior and subject leaders are working to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and the impact of the feedback that students receive on their work. Detailed plans are in place to ensure that future judgements about the quality of teaching are based upon the impact that it has upon students' progress over time. Leaders have agreed upon the features of effective teaching and feedback that they expect to see when they monitor standards within the classroom and check students' work. They provide teachers with both precisely-tailored support in order to help them to improve, and challenge if that improvement is insufficiently rapid. Senior leaders have sharpened the focus of their meetings with subject leaders, so that these focus upon students' progress and the impact of additional support in accelerating it. Governors, together with the Saffron Academy Trust, are holding you and other leaders to account by making regular checks on the impact of the actions taken to achieve the academy's improvement plan objectives.

Subject leaders are changing course plans to enable students to develop the necessary knowledge and skills and achieve highly both at the end of the course or key stage, and beyond. Common assessment tasks are being introduced so that teachers and leaders gain a regular and clear indication of the rates of progress made by individuals, and any gaps in their knowledge or understanding. However, some of the assessments students currently complete within Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently challenging, and arrangements for checking the accuracy of the marks or grades applied to students' work are not always secure. This means that teachers' monitoring information does not always help them to identify those students who need more help or who could be moved on quickly. Leaders are making sure that effective techniques that many teachers use to offer students precise feedback on their work are shared. Usually, feedback makes clear to students what they need to do next; this is not the case throughout the school and there is inconsistency within science. Some students continue to make the same mistakes as a result.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Representatives of both the academy trust and the local authority are offering senior leaders effective support as they work towards the academy's improvement plans; they also check the accuracy of leaders' judgements about the extent of progress. Advice from mathematics and English consultants is helping to drive forward improvement in both subject areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
cc. Local authority
cc. For academies only CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk