

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 9154
Direct email: aidan.dunne@serco.com



19 June 2015

Mal Kerr
Headteacher
Noel-Baker School
Bracknell Drive
Alvaston
Derby
DE24 0BR

Dear Mr Kerr

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Noel-Baker School

Following my visit to your school on Friday 19 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 February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- eliminate disruption in lessons, so that all students can get on with their work
- make sure all staff consistently apply the behaviour management policy.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of L.E.A.D Academy Trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A conversation with the local authority representative took place by telephone. The school improvement plans and self-evaluation were reviewed. I visited lessons with the deputy headteacher, conducted a work scrutiny of books with the subject leaders of mathematics and English and observed student behaviour at lunchtime and change of lessons. A range of documentation was evaluated including: information on how teachers track students' achievement, attendance and behaviour, records of the monitoring of teaching and information about students' current progress.

Context

Since the last inspection, plans have been implemented for the school to become an academy as part of L.E.A.D Academy Trust. The structure of the senior leadership team and leaders' roles and responsibilities have changed. Significant changes in middle leadership have taken place or are planned to take place from September 2015.

Main findings

Planning for improvement is now sharply focused. The 'Drill Down Plans' appropriately address the areas for improvement set out in the inspection report. Key actions are clear and milestones for when success will be reviewed and then how impact will be measured are precise. There has been swift action to review the senior and middle leadership of the school. As a result, lines of accountability are clearer and there is now a more precise approach to school improvement.

There has been a rapid response to ensure that leaders have a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place within the school. As a result underperformance has been quickly addressed. The new quality assurance system uses a range of evidence to build an accurate view about the impact of teaching on students' learning. Leaders say that teachers now have a better understanding of what good teaching and learning looks like and that they now have a shared language to describe it. The capacity within the school to improve teaching is building and the school has a group of coaches and lead practitioners who work alongside colleagues to develop their skills and share good practice.

Following the inspection you implemented a new data tracking system to give leaders and teachers 'much sharper' information about the attainment and progress of individual students and groups of students. Target setting is now more appropriately focused on the progress that should be made from individual starting points. This is resulting in swifter intervention for students at risk of falling behind, and better achievement for students currently in the school. More students are on

track to make the expected progress within English. However there remains much to be done to ensure that students make expected progress within science and mathematics. The data tracking system allows for greater triangulation between the information on student performance, the quality of teaching and the way in which teachers and leaders are held to account. Data is not used well enough to improve outcomes in Key Stage 3.

Scrutiny of student work shows that marking is not used consistently well. The sample of English books seen showed exemplary examples of how marking and feedback can help students move their learning on. However the sample of marking seen in mathematics books showed inconsistent marking and low expectations as to what students could achieve.

There are improved systems in place to ensure students attend school and attendance in some year groups is improving. You recognise there is still work to do. Students said that they were aware that attending school was now a priority. One student described how his attendance was now at 100% due to support from the school and his own realisation of the importance of achieving good GCSE grades. The students said they appreciated the rewards for attendance given by the school.

During the lessons I visited with the deputy headteacher teachers were seen using the data and tracking system to record assessment information within the lesson. There was evidence of compliance to the whole school policy of ensuring that objectives, suitable for a range of abilities, were displayed and shared with students. Evidence was seen of planning for different abilities and of teachers providing students with extension activities. One group of students was able to grasp complex concepts within a music lesson and used a literacy resource to improve their understanding of subject specific language.

In some lessons seen however, there was evidence that students were being insufficiently challenged about the quality of their work, their behaviour and their appearance.

Work to develop students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in and around the school is at an early stage of implementation. Planning is in place to ensure increased accountability and consistency for students, teachers and leaders. A behaviour learning group has been established to allow the opportunity for staff to contribute to behaviour policies. Although there has rightly been a focus to improve behaviour management systems the actions on the ground have been slow to impact and the behaviour of some students is problematic. The poor behaviour that was seen during the inspection at lunchtime and between lessons was not always challenged by staff. Adult supervision at lunchtime did not always encourage good behaviour.

When asked, students, including sixth form students, said that poor behaviour in lessons was something they regularly experienced and that they would wish to see

this improve. They felt poor behaviour was having a negative effect on their learning.

Governors continue to provide support to the school and are keen to attend training so that they can improve their effectiveness in holding school leaders to account for the success of their work. A review of the effectiveness of governance is yet to take place.

External support

Prior to the school's conversion to an academy it received support from the local authority senior school improvement officer and a local National Leader of Education. School based leadership development and training linked to the progress of disadvantaged students, were of particular value to the school at this time. Since the school has put plans in place to convert to an academy with L.E.A.D Academy Trust, extensive and 'front loaded' support has been provided by the Trust. This includes comprehensive leadership guidance, including training for governors. Regular and bespoke advice and guidance is now on-going from specialists brokered by the Trust. The school are now 'tapping into' the expertise of a local Teaching School; the links at subject level to improve assessment and moderation have been particularly helpful. Productive links remain with the local authority and the school are still involved in some local authority networks.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for insert local authority name and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk