

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



17 November 2015

Mr P Heery
Executive Headteacher
The Bramcote School
Derby Rd
Bramcote
Nottingham
NG9 3GD

Dear Mr Heery

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Bramcote School

Following my visit to your academy on 2 November 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 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 in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the head of school and other senior leaders, students and two members of the Governing Body, including the Chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I toured the academy with the head of school and made short visits to lessons accompanied by the director of teaching and learning. Together we looked at the quality of work in students' books. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans, monitoring records, performance management information and minutes of the governing body. I also scrutinised the checks made on staff.

Context

Since the previous inspection, five members of staff have left and six have been appointed: one in mathematics, two in science, one in religious studies, one in information and communication technology, and a new head of geography. The director of learning for humanities is currently on maternity leave. A full-time teaching assistant has been appointed to the mathematics department and two further mathematics teachers will take up post in January 2016.

Main findings

You fully accept the areas for improvement identified in the inspection, and have taken difficult but important decisions in order to bring about the necessary improvement to the academy.

You have made urgent and necessary changes to the mathematics department. These have included the appointment of additional staff to work with students who are at risk of underachievement and the secondment of a senior leader from the partner school in the White Hills federation to help oversee improvements and provide additional teaching capacity. You have arranged external support from the Minster Teaching School Alliance to strengthen the leadership and teaching in the department. You have commissioned an external review of the department that has identified strengths, as well as the areas where the department still needs to improve. These measures are beginning to have impact, and teaching is showing signs of improvement. In the mathematics lessons we visited, students were engaged and focused on their work. They were learning well because teachers' explanations were clear, and individual feedback and intervention work was helping them to improve their knowledge and understanding. Students I spoke with told me that they were now making better progress in mathematics as a result of improved teaching.

You and other leaders have developed well thought-out plans to improve the quality of teaching. For example, you and other leaders identified those teachers whose practice required improvement and put in place closely targeted support and challenge to help them improve their practice. You have also identified teachers to be part of the leading practice group, who are helping to share best practice more widely and ensure that all teachers can learn from the best that is in the federation. Further opportunities to improve teaching have been brokered through the Minster teaching school alliance.

In the lessons we visited, most teachers were using information about students' prior attainment to ensure that work is set at the right level. The use of higher order thinking ('HOT') questions in lessons is effective in challenging the more-able students in particular to extend their knowledge and understanding. There is some way to go to ensure that these students are consistently challenged in all lessons, however, and are not given work that is too easy for them.

My scrutiny of students' work showed that teachers are providing students with feedback that tells them how to improve their work. Students I spoke with felt this was a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Not all teachers check that students follow up this feedback, however, so that the impact of this is sometimes lost.

You and other leaders have taken effective steps to ensure that all teachers have high expectations that students will behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Following the inspection you reviewed and relaunched the behaviour policy. You have established a clear set of 'systems for success' that you expect to be in place in every lesson; in their regular behaviour walks, leaders check that teachers are applying the policy consistently to ensure better learning. Students reported that teachers are now 'much stricter' on issues such as uniform and they understand – and appreciate – why this is so.

Students take good care of their books and, generally, present their work well. Regular lesson monitoring rightly focuses on this aspect of behaviour to ensure that all teachers have the same high expectations for the presentation of students' work.

Since the previous inspection you have made significant improvements to leadership at all levels. You have further strengthened leadership through the secondment of a 'future leaders' teacher and have put in place a raft of measures to improve the effectiveness of subject leaders. Several leaders are taking part in tailored leadership development programmes run by good and outstanding local schools, and additional support from the Minister Teaching School Alliance is providing targeted support for some department heads. These measures are ensuring that middle leaders have a clearer understanding of their role in holding their subject teachers to account. Heads of department now carry out their own regular, rigorous quality assurance and monitoring activities. They identify, for example, whether teachers are marking in line with the academy's policy and take appropriate action where this is not the case. They work closely with directors of learning and other senior leaders to ensure that teachers have the right support and challenge to improve their practice.

You have rightly recognised the need to ensure that teachers' predictions for students' achievement are more accurate. Middle leaders have worked with colleagues across the federation and in partner schools to moderate and quality assure the accuracy of teachers' assessments. In addition, some have trained as examination markers themselves.

A rigorous programme of departmental reviews has been put in place that sees subject leaders reporting to senior leaders and directors on the quality of teaching and achievement in their departments. The reviews take a wide range of information into account and ensure that observations of teaching include a scrutiny of students' work. They have helped middle leaders to have a better understanding of the quality

of teaching in their departments, because they ensure that a wider range of evidence is taken into account when making these judgements.

Lesson observations focus more closely on the suitability of tasks to the ability level of students and the progress they make. This ensures that teachers are increasingly confident about the elements of teaching that lead to good learning and progress.

You have set challenging targets for all teachers that are based on the achievement of students. This has left teachers in no doubt as to the urgency of making the necessary improvements, since you have ensured that teachers' pay is linked firmly to their performance in the classroom.

The governors are skilled, knowledgeable and highly committed to ensuring the academy improves quickly. They hold academy leaders stringently to account for progress against the action plan through regular meetings that evaluate the impact of actions taken, and identify the further steps that need to be taken to accelerate progress. They have ensured that the information that academy leaders tell them about the quality of teaching is correct, for example by carrying out work scrutinies themselves and checking that middle leaders are using data effectively. 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

Leaders and directors have wisely recognised the need to seek out support and expertise from outside the trust to accelerate the progress the academy is making. This has included support for individual departments, teaching and leadership support. Four subject leaders are working on improving their leadership skills through a programme which is run jointly with the teaching school alliance. This has helped these leaders improve their judgements on the quality of teaching and in holding their members of staff to account.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Nottingham local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector