

Prospects Learning Services Ltd
132-138 High Street
Bromley
Kent
BR1 1EZ

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 020 8313 7760
Direct F 020 8464 3393



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Ms Deborah Forster
The Headteacher
Trinity School
Love Lane
Shaw
Newbury
RG14 2DU

Dear Ms Forster

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the comprehensive information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also thank the staff and students who met me in addition to the Local Authority representative and your School Improvement Partner.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in February 2007, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards overall and particularly in mathematics and science.
- Increase the proportion of good or better lessons so as to speed up the overall rate of students' progress; eliminate the remaining shortcomings in teaching and learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of middle managers so that more are of the calibre of the best; strengthen their skills in assessing and speeding up students' academic achievements.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Leadership and management at all levels but in particular from the headteacher and her senior team have been vigorous in the pursuit of the improvements required at the last full school inspection. A significant number of initiatives and structures are now firmly in place providing a strong platform for further improvement.

Key Stage 3 results for 2007 show that standards in mathematics and science, although below those found nationally, continue to rise. Standards in English however fell due to significant but unavoidable staff absence. This issue has now been resolved and evidence shows that achievement at Key Stage 3 in English is now good again. Data, which has yet to be fully validated, indicates that 37% of students attained at least five higher grades at GCSE including English and Mathematics in 2007. Although lower than the previous year the school almost met its challenging target for this particular year group. Students are now making satisfactory progress in mathematics, with particular improvements in the achievement of girls, and continue to make good progress in English. However, a legacy of poor teaching led to considerable underachievement in science and a small proportion of other subjects. This in turn significantly contributed to the overall low standards at GCSE in 2007. Results of GCSE science modules for current Year 11 students and classroom monitoring indicate that achievement is now improving. In addition the school has identified a small cohort of students with long-term absence who are significantly underachieving. Work is being undertaken to address this and a recent visit from the National Strategies behaviour and attendance advisor recently commended this.

School leaders and governors have worked to ensure a stable staffing structure for this year with the capacity to bring about improvements in teaching and learning. This has led to a high proportion of teachers new to both the school and the teaching profession. The school has a very secure and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvements of both individual teachers and departments, due to a comprehensive programme of monitoring and auditing. This information is being used to tailor individualised support and guidance in addition to a comprehensive programme of whole-staff training and development. Staff are very positive about this and in discussions gave clear examples of impact on their teaching and students' learning. Lesson monitoring records shows greater consistency in teachers sharing learning goals with their classes and giving feedback on the next steps that students need to take in order to improve.

However, internal records and my visits to a sample of classrooms indicated that there is still too much variability in the quality of teaching across the school in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics. Too little teaching is yet good or better, in part due to the inexperience of many teachers. Whilst otherwise satisfactory, some lessons are characterised by too little student engagement or active involvement leading to limited progress. In addition in a small number of lessons the low-level disruption of a minority of students impedes the learning of others. Students I talked to also raised this as a concern.

Inadequacies in the leadership of some subject areas have been clearly dealt with. All middle managers are committed to the senior team's vision for school improvement. Individualised and tailored support, including that from the Local Authority and School Improvement Partner, has been put in place for new middle managers ensuring, in particular, that mathematics and science are now well led.

The school has made considerable progress in developing and embedding a system to track students' achievement. Staff are very positive about the system and it is being used consistently to identify concerns with students and target intervention.

The degree to which individual teachers effectively use information about students to plan their lessons is variable.

The local authority has provided appropriate support for the school. In particular the School Improvement Partner has been centrally involved in monitoring and working with the science and mathematics departments in addition to providing good support for the senior leadership.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Maria A Dawes

Maria Dawes
Her Majesty's Inspector