

Serco Inspections  
Boundary House  
2 Wythall Green Way  
Middle Lane  
BIRMINGHAM  
West Midlands  
B47 6LW

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



Thursday 27 May 2010

Ms Ann Jones  
CTC Kingshurst Academy  
Cooks Lane  
Kingshurst  
Birmingham  
B37 6NZ

Dear Ms Jones

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection to CTC Kingshurst Academy

## Introduction

Following my visit with Kevin Sheldrick to your CTC Kingshurst Academy on 25–26 May 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, senior leaders, groups of students, the chair of governors, representing the Trust as a sponsor governor, and the chair of the curriculum advisory group.

## Context

The City Technology College was redesignated as the CTC Kingshurst Academy in September 2008. On becoming an academy six representatives of the Trust became 'sponsor' governors in the reconstituted governing body. The role of the trust is yet to be determined as no sponsor is involved. This situation is unique to CTC Kingshurst. Visual arts was added to existing specialisms in technology and Training School for the new academy. Continuity in leadership and staffing has provided stability for students during the transition. Admission to the academy is now managed by the local authority, and it remains over subscribed. There has been considerable difficulty recruiting and retaining mathematic teachers in recent years. A school improvement partner has worked with the school since designation. Significant building and refurbishment work is taking place to support improvements



to the learning environment. The work and status of the extended schools and training school managers have been enhanced to develop further links with the local community.

CTC Kingshurst Academy is larger than average in size. There are currently 1590 students on roll, including 387 in the sixth form. The academy attracts students from a very large number of primary schools in Solihull and beyond. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds with an above average proportion eligible for free school meals. A large majority of students are of White British heritage with a wide range of other minority ethnic backgrounds represented. The number who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of students identified by the academy with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national figure. The change to admission arrangements has led to a slight increase in this figure. Attainment on entry is above average based on Key Stage 2 tests with significantly more students at the higher levels, than found nationally. The vast majority of students continue their education beyond the age of 16 either at the academy or with other local providers. The academy offers the International Baccalaureate or BTEC National Diploma, and this provision attracts students from local schools. The profile of attainment on entry to sixth form courses is broadly in line with national averages.

### Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the national average on all key indicators apart from mathematics, and this reflects performance in the predecessor school. In 2009, 91% of students gained five or more GCSE passes at A\*-C, an improvement of five percentage points. This is well supported by standards in science, English and vocational subjects. When English and mathematics are included the proportion to reach this benchmark is 59%, well below the academy's target, particularly for high and middle ability students. This is explained by weaknesses in mathematics. A lack of stability in staffing in recent years has resulted in significant disruption to student's learning and progress, shown in low standards. In 2009, students made significantly less progress than expected overall given their attainment on entry. This arose from the weakness in mathematics, variation across courses, and too few students reaching the higher A\* and A grades. In the sixth form students make the progress expected from their attainment on entry to Year 12.

Current performance data for Year 11 indicates an improvement in the proportion expected to gain higher grades in both English and mathematics this year. The academy has a good understanding of assessment data in Key Stage 3, and has retained a strong focus on testing in Year 9 to underpin higher expectations in Key Stage 4. Outcomes in 2009 confirm that strategies adopted by a more stable team in



mathematics led to a notable improvement in Key Stage 3. It is recognised that there is still further work required to consolidate this trend. The use of targets and assessment continue to be refined. Academy status has given access to additional data sources to support higher expectations and a greater level of challenge in academic targets. Leaders recognise the need to extend the use of targets for specific groups of learners, such as the most able to reinforce the emphasis on progress from Key Stage 2, and to strengthen accountability. The analysis of progress for sub-groups of learners is not fully developed.

Evidence from lesson observation indicates that students enjoy their learning and good relationships with staff and their peers.

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students have very positive attitudes towards the academy and their learning, and enjoy the many enrichment activities available to provide new experiences. Attendance is average and shows a slight improvement on the previous year. Students' behaviour in and out of lessons is good and they cope well with changes arising from the building and refurbishment programme. There is a strong sense of loyalty to the academy and genuine appreciation of the high quality care and support they receive. This enables students to feel safe and secure. Opportunities to take responsibility for example, through leadership schemes are numerous. Sixth formers are particularly positive about the extent they can positively contribute. In addition to the considerable opportunities to volunteer to help others, they spoke about how well the academy listens and responds to their ideas. Students in Key Stage 4 were less positive about how well the academy involves them in decision-making to influence their learning and well-being, and developments within the academy. Younger students were very enthusiastic about the help they received from older students, especially on transfer.

#### The effectiveness of provision

There is too much variability in teaching and the use of assessment. A few lessons observed were inadequate and a significant proportion satisfactory. Lessons are planned to a consistent format and set out a sequence of activities. Too often the same task is set for all learners and prior learning and assessment information is not used effectively enough to pitch tasks to match students' needs. This means that expectations are not always high enough. A lack of clarity about learning outcomes reduces the effectiveness of some lessons and the ability of students to measure their progress. In many lessons there is too much reliance on teacher talk and not enough is made of the visual dimension, including through the use of information



and communication technology. Opportunities are often missed to provide written guidance in students' books on how they can improve the quality of their work, and there are inconsistencies in standards of presentation.

Students make better progress in lessons where teachers check understanding frequently, and set out clearly how learning will be assessed. When this awareness is combined with an interesting context for learning, students work independently and with high levels of motivation. For example, in an English lesson students were very excited about the questions they were producing for a mock trial related to the Frankenstein monster. Awareness of the assessment criteria allowed students to produce very high quality written work. Assessment criteria are used increasingly, and in many lessons observed students used self and peer assessment. This worked best when the language level supported students' understanding and it was an embedded part of classroom practice. This was evident in a physical education lesson where students had internalised the criteria to the extent that they could ascribe levels without any prompts. Until relatively recently students have made inadequate progress in mathematics because of weak teaching. This situation has improved recently as a result of more stable staffing. Inspectors observed some highly effective teaching in Year 7 where students successfully completed GCSE level questions.

The curriculum has significant strengths and contributes well to above average standards. Students are highly appreciative of the wide choices they have from Year 8. The curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs of different groups. For instance, the transition into Year 7 is eased by the existence of a more primary based curriculum for the minority of potentially vulnerable students. In recent years partnership activity has blossomed so a very wide range of vocational courses and alternative pathways are available to meet the needs of the full ability range. Visual arts status has resulted in especially clear progression routes related to art. Sixth form students talked with great pride about their own mini-studios, replicating provision in higher education. Academy facilities are used by an increasingly wide range of community groups.

There are strengths in care, support and guidance. Student welfare is a high priority reflected in strong transition arrangements, the sophisticated analysis of students' personal needs and the wide range of well targeted interventions.

Where lessons are well planned teaching assistants are effective in supporting students in lessons. Additional out of lesson support is also available. Provision for gifted and talented students enriches their experience but is not sufficiently focused on maximising progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management



Leaders and governors are hugely ambitious for the academy and share a strong commitment to achieve success. The transition to academy status has been used to restructure leadership and management to provide a stonger focus on teaching and learning. Staff have created a positive and inclusive ethos which instils a strong sense of pride and community spirit. The principal has a good understanding of the strengths and relative weaknesses and with the support of senior leaders is beginning to raise the level of challenge across the academy. Attainment has been the dominant indicator of success in recent years and leaders are working hard to ensure that student progress is also firmly at the core of the academy's work. This is most evident in Years 7 and 8 where the slight change in student intake has challenged staff to consider individual needs more carefully. Adjustments to curriculum provision for more vulnerable learners demonstrates a strong understanding of student needs on entry. Leaders and governors have taken steps to tackle identified weakness in subject areas. It has taken considerable time to resolve issues in mathematics but evidence indicates that standards are rising, supported by improved leadership.

A high priority has been set to monitor teaching quality through a designated audit team. The visit confirmed that the academy's lesson observation judgements tended to be over generous arising from their pre-arranged nature. However, during the monitoring inspection 16 joint observations took place, and judgements were agreed in 15 lessons to demonstrate a secure capacity to make judgements across the range of teaching quality. Regular training is in place to enhance teaching skills with targeted coaching for identified staff. A wide range of quality assurance processes are in place to support improvement which make heavy demands on senior staff. Although they provide much detailed information they lack coherence and sharp judgements to support systematic self-evaluation and effective action. Development plans and target setting statement set out priorities to guide improvement although they lack measurable success criteria to track progress securely, particularly for groups of learners.

The governing body has an effective committee structure to oversee the work of the academy with a blend of academic, business and community reresentatives. The curriculum advisory group has a strong focus on different subject areas and is very knowledgeable about strengths and priorities. Target and assessment tracking information is not routinely shared to ensure that all govenors are aware of overall progress and that of different groups of learners. Appropriate checks are made on all staff to meet government requirements, and robust procedures are in place to manage health and safety.

External support



The School Improvement Partner has provided helpful support and guidance for self-evaluation, transition to academy status and the development of additional partnership links. Productive links with the local authority enable access to specialist services. The academy plays a full part in the local attendance and behaviour partnership.

### Main Judgements

The academy has made satisfactory progress towards raising standards.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the proportion of good teaching by improving the use of assessment in the planning and delivery of lessons so that all students are challenged through a range of differentiated tasks.
- Strengthen the quality and impact of classroom monitoring to eliminate inadequate teaching.
- Ensure that development planning includes precise objectives supported by measurable success criteria to track progress accurately.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, Paul Hann, the chair of governors and the Academies Group at the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic  
Her Majesty's Inspector