

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Serco
Direct T 0121 683 3888



2 February 2012

Mrs Christina Moon
Executive Principal
The Business Academy Bexley
Yarnton Way
Erith
DA18 4DW

Dear Mrs Moon

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Business Academy Bexley

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I and my colleagues inspected your academy on 1 February 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. We appreciated the openness and confidence with which staff and students answered our questions and showed us their work.

Since the last inspection, the senior leadership tier of the Academy has been restructured, with four new post holders joining the secondary sector: a deputy headteacher overseeing curriculum and teaching and leading the collection, analysis and use of information about students' progress; an assistant headteacher with responsibility for the sixth form; an assistant headteacher with responsibility for inclusion; and an associate headteacher on the Future Leaders programme with responsibility for developing teaching and learning. A move from mixed-age tutor groups to a year-based system has given middle leaders and managers – principally heads of learning for each year and heads of faculty – more clearly defined and substantial areas of responsibility.

As a result of the inspection on 16 June 2010, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and is demonstrating an improved capacity for sustained improvement.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

January 2012



In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress in all areas of their development, so that they enter Key Stage 1 with positive attitudes to learning and secure basic skills. Results in 2011 were the best ever achieved by the academy. Attainment by all groups at the end of Key Stage 1 is improving steadily from a low base. The greatest strength is in reading, which is now broadly average. A similar pattern is evident in Key Stage 2; overall attainment is rising. More than two-thirds of pupils in Year 5 have already exceeded the overall progress expected for this school year. Assessment of pupils' attainment and rate of progress has become more accurate and all teachers now use up-to-date information when planning lessons and when identifying any additional support needed. In a Year 3 English class, for example, a small group of pupils was making good progress with support from a teaching assistant, focusing on aspects shown by recent assessment to be weak. In Key Stage 2 better than average progress is made in mathematics by boys, by pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and by those in the largest minority ethnic group. Overall progress in English is broadly average, including progress by those known to be eligible for free school meals and those on the 'school action plus' programme. Inspectors heard Year 6 pupils across the ability range read aloud with understanding and expression. Pupils know their strengths and areas for development and are keen to meet targets set for them.

At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades, or equivalent, including English and mathematics exceeds government floor standards. Pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, now make better than average progress in English and in science. A new system for collating and analysing information about pupils' attainment and progress has recently been introduced and is being used with growing confidence by managers and teachers to plan lessons and to target interventions more effectively. For example, a 'catch up' literacy programme and a reading intervention programme are making a positive difference to targeted pupils in Year 7. Pupils are well motivated and responsive. They support each other readily, sharing ideas and skills constructively. For example, Year 11 pupils who have already gained a good grade in GCSE mathematics are tutoring others in their year group with zest and efficiency.

Attainment at AS and A level is steadily improving. Overall pass rates at A level are in line with national averages but the proportion of high grades remains low. Students have a positive attitude to learning and many aim to go on to university or college. In lessons, they contribute confidently to discussion and are clearly well used to offering constructive feedback to each other. The level of challenge presented by teachers is not, however, always high enough to ensure that they make good progress and achieve high grades. This was observed across a range of subjects.

Teaching

Substantial time and resources are being invested constructively to develop teachers' confidence and competence in using information about pupils' attainment and

progress and to ensure that good practice is disseminated and embedded. Teachers feel well supported and are keen to improve their skills. Accurate assessment by senior leaders of lessons observed jointly with inspectors indicates that the academy's evaluation of teaching is robust and that improvements tracked over the past year are secure. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the proportion of good teaching has increased steadily since 2010, to well over half. Good teaching, particularly in Key Stage 4, is successfully improving students' progress. Amongst the strengths observed across the academy were: secure subject knowledge; a productive rapport with pupils; confident use of varied resources and activities to match pupils' learning styles and to maintain their interest; and careful assessment of pupils' grasp of the content and skills being covered. A successfully inclusive Year 10 business studies lesson, for example, included role play to illustrate three methods of production, whole class discussion and an engaging use of interactive technology. Pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 spoke of teachers making learning 'more fun' because they 'do different things' and 'seem better organised'. In the less effective lessons seen - in the sixth form, for example - opportunities were missed to challenge pupils to develop their ideas beyond a simple response, the focus was on what was to be done rather than on what was to be learnt, and scope for independent learning was limited.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils of all ages are friendly and supportive of each other and behave sensibly. The recent switch from mixed-age to year-based tutor groups has enabled tutors and the heads of learning for each year to be consistent and more incisive in ensuring that pupils' behaviour helps rather than hinders their learning. In Key Stages 3 and 4, for example, rates of attendance have risen steeply. Senior pupils and sixth formers are good role models, both in the way they present themselves and in the contribution they make as mentors and leaders.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Vigorously led by you, the consultant primary headteacher and secondary headteacher, and with very well deployed and constructive input from consultants, the senior leadership team of the Academy is developing and rigorously monitoring strategies to improve teaching and learning.. In the primary school, for example, curriculum changes are steadily improving pupils' attainment, conspicuously so in writing, identified as a particular weakness. Middle leaders and managers throughout the academy are benefiting from greater clarity about their roles and accountability and from well-directed professional development. They voice wholehearted support for the vision and priorities presented by senior leaders and are justifiably confident that they now have the tools, the information and the authority to improve teaching and learning in their areas. Heads of faculty are able to identify high-achieving and underachieving groups and individuals in their subjects and to evaluate the impact of interventions. In mathematics, for example, a specialist teaching assistant is successfully supporting the high proportion in top sets of pupils who speak English

as an additional language. The quality of teaching overall, however, is still uneven. Heads of learning can demonstrate that having overall responsibility for the work and well-being of pupils in their year groups has led to improvements in attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your academy. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies, the post-inspection letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation.
- The Young People's Learning Agency - for secondary schools with a sixth form
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies

The letters should also be copied electronically to:

each member of the inspection team,

A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the:

Lead inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Raise learners' attainment by:
 - focusing on how students learn and increasing the range of teaching and learning styles they experience
 - making effective use of learner performance data by teachers to support planning, teaching practice and learning intervention
 - increasing the effectiveness of middle leaders to drive improvement.