

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



11 June 2013

Peter Baker
Headteacher
Mount Grace School
Church Road
Potters Bar
EN6 1EZ

Dear Mr Baker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mount Grace School

Following my visit to your academy on 10 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, a group of students, five members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated both the school improvement plan summary and action plans. I visited a small number of classes accompanied by you to gauge the quality of teaching and learning. I also checked your most up-to-date records of recruitment checks on staff.

Context

Four members of the current senior leadership team are leaving the school at the end of the school year, and you have found replacements for all of them. You have made a number of new subject leader appointments who will take up their posts in September 2013. Since the previous inspection, three teachers joined the school, one of whom has since left.

Main findings

Because you had already evaluated the school's overall effectiveness as 'requiring improvement' prior to the last inspection, you had identified what the school needed to do to become good. The School Improvement Plan Summary and associated action plans correctly focus on key action points which aim to secure a 'good' judgement within a realistic time frame. The action plans are detailed, clearly stating the actions each member of staff should play in raising standards and how the impact of their actions will be measured.

You have tackled some aspects identified in the previous inspection report quickly, and the actions you have taken are starting to make a difference. Students told me that they find the new marking system much more helpful, and those I spoke to understand what they have to do to improve. Your decisive action in dealing with the small minority of students whose behaviour was unacceptable has had a noticeable impact on the majority who want to achieve well. However, students told me that not all teachers apply the classroom procedure for managing behaviour consistently. Your monitoring activities, including visits to classes, are identifying a gradual increase in the proportion of teaching which is good and better, although there is still too much teaching which requires improvement or is inadequate.

You have reviewed the systems in place for tracking students' progress to ensure greater accuracy and challenge. As you have decided to gather student progress data less frequently, i.e. once per term, rather than twice, it is essential that systems are robust and that you train all the new heads of subject areas in how to interpret data, and to set realistic but challenging targets.

Governors do not yet provide a strong challenge to you and your senior staff, as their understanding of students' achievement data is developing. Following training and an external review of their effectiveness, they are requesting more detailed information from you on the progress made by different groups of students.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- Increase the proportion of teaching which is good and better at a faster rate.
- Implement classroom procedures for managing behaviour consistently.
- Ensure governors provide stronger challenge and hold you and other leaders to account for the progress made by different groups of students.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

In addition to working with members of the governing body, the local authority also assisted with the appointment of new senior leaders. The local authority's human resources department has supported you in dealing with sensitive staffing issues. You have forged positive working relationships with other local secondary schools where good practice is shared. One local school has provided support for less effective subject areas including the design and technology and science faculties. You have also made use of external consultants to validate the robustness of your own judgements on the academy's effectiveness.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector