

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

Direct T 0121 679 9161
Direct email: ann.morris@serco.com



10 September 2013

Mr Graham Lloyd
Principal
The Holly Hall Academy
Scotts Green Close
Dudley
DY1 2DU

Dear Mr Lloyd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Holly Hall Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 9 September 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- make sure that all students experience teaching that is engaging and inspiring and supports them to make good and better progress
- make explicit in the academy's action plan the role of governors in monitoring specific actions.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders and three members of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The post-Ofsted action plan was evaluated. We spent some time in a range of lessons and I considered other documents in relation to students' achievement and the outcomes of monitoring activities.

Context

The Governing Body has been reconstituted since the time of the last inspection and the number of members has been reduced. An adviser from the Department for Education's (DfE) Academies Unit visited in June 2013.

Main findings

Academy leaders are tackling weaknesses in teaching through training for teachers and increased levels of monitoring. The academy's evidence shows that the quality of teaching is improving. However, you and other leaders acknowledge that there is still much to do. The short observations of teaching on this visit confirm that the quality of teaching remains too variable. For example, there was some good learning in science where students responded well to the teacher's probing questions. However, in other classes teaching was uninspiring and students were not sufficiently challenged; it is to the students' credit that they remained focused and well-behaved in these classes. Academy records show that there have been some improvements to the quality of written feedback for students.

Initial analysis of 2013 GCSE results indicate a very slight improvement in the number of students gaining 5 or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grade C or above. Achievement in mathematics rose for the third consecutive year but achievement in English declined from that of 2012. As Principal, you immediately commissioned an external consultant with expertise in English to undertake a review of the English department in the second week of term. Academy leaders are now working on a more detailed analysis of achievement by different groups and you have agreed to send this to me. The academy's records indicate that students are beginning to make quicker progress than has been the case in the past.

An appropriate post-Ofsted action plan was written for the summer term, with the autumn term version ready to be agreed by governors. Plans need to make sure that the role of governors in monitoring the work of the academy are made explicit. Academy leaders have introduced more detailed reviews of students' progress in Key Stage 3 and are now better able to challenge leaders of these subjects. Since the inspection, governors have an increased awareness of how well different groups of students are achieving as a result of being given more information by academy leaders. Regular meetings of the 'Academy Improvement Group' have sharpened members' focus on students' achievement.

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

External support

Support from a consultant has helped to develop senior and subject leaders' confidence and skills in making judgements on the quality of teaching and students' achievement. As Principal, you are drawing on expertise from 'good' schools to support a range of subject-specific and academy-wide improvements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and the DfE Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector