

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 9158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com



17 December 2013

Mrs Christine Brown
Ounsdale High School
Ounsdale Road
Wombourne
WV5 8BJ

Dear Miss Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ounsdale High School

Following my visit to your school on 16 December 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- ensure teaching consistently ensures pupils work at a fast pace
- ensure the school's improvement planning includes shorter term targets, particularly for students eligible for free school meals, that more clearly indicate the expectation that pupils will make good progress
- Ensure the governing body has access to an independent source of advice.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other leaders, the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body meetings and assessment information were evaluated. Short visits were made to ten lessons to observe teaching.

Context

Since the school's section 5 inspection, a new local authority governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

You and your staff have worked hard since the inspection to address all of the issues raised then. There have been notable improvements in teachers' marking. Strengths and targets for improvement are almost always identified and students are responding to this. Some teachers are effectively training students so they can accurately self and peer assess; for instance in English students benefited greatly from comparing the teacher's assessments of their performance to their own self-assessments.

Pupils were engaged in the lessons seen; teachers are using a wide range of activities to actively involve pupils in their learning. The most effective lessons were those in which pupils could make choices and move quickly onto the work they found challenging. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher was able to maximise the impact of his teaching by playing a video of himself teaching calculations related to fractions. He was then available to challenge other pupils who had already grasped this aspect. At times, the pace of learning slows because pupils undertake too many similar questions and do not progress quickly enough onto more challenging work. At other times, opportunities are missed to involve pupils more in higher order thinking. The leaders responsible for improving teaching have an astute awareness of the issues that need to be addressed.

Assessment information is being used more effectively. As a result of the out of lesson support provided by teaching assistants, special needs students have made impressive gains so their reading ages are now closer to their chronological ages. Assessment information is being used far more effectively to hold leaders to account. The school was able to present very clear evidence that the gap in achievement between students' eligible for free school meals and others is reducing because they are being much more carefully monitored.

The school's improvement plan is comprehensive and contains many indicators that can be used to check regularly the progress being made. The plan contains longer term targets related to student progress from Year 7 through to Year 11, but these imply that the majority of pupils will not be making good progress.

Although the review of governance is planned for early next term, the governing body has taken steps to improve its effectiveness. The minutes indicate that the governing body is asking more questions about key aspects of the work of the school. Governors have also recognised that they need to ensure they have an independent source of advice, particularly related to the national performance information.

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

The local authority is undertaking regular reviews, collaboratively with the school's senior leadership team. This strategy is increasing the confidence of the school's senior leaders. The local authority has organised the review of governance and has been instrumental in assisting the school in developing valued partnership working with another school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector