

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9164
Direct email: tim.ogbourn@serco.com

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Mr Gerard Batty
Executive Headteacher
Stalham High School
Brumstead Road
Stalham
Norwich
NR12 9DG

Dear Mr Batty

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stalham High School

Following my visit to your school on 20 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 26 November 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with yourself, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), a representative of the local authority and with a group of students. You also conducted me on a tour of the school, visiting lessons and looking at students' work. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection there have been a number of staff changes and some staffing turbulence, with several teachers absent for extended periods of time. Following the departure of the headteacher, you took up post as Executive Headteacher in January, spending half of each week in school. A science teacher was appointed in January, and leadership in mathematics has been bolstered by an internal

promotion. Following publication of the inspection report in February, the governing body was immediately replaced by an interim executive board (IEB), comprising three members. The local authority is currently working closely with the IEB to find a sponsor for the school to become an academy, with a proposed opening date in September 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders have taken swift and decisive action to strengthen the school. The IEB has brought clarity of purpose, efficiency and decisiveness to governance which was hitherto lacking. Winning the hearts and minds of staff, students and parents has been particularly difficult because the 'inadequate' inspection judgement in November followed so soon after the school had been judged 'good'. Leaders have addressed the disappointment and, at times, disbelief by making clear what the school must do to improve and how this will be achieved. Securing the best possible results for students in Year 11 has been the key priority, but higher expectations have been established for standards in teaching, behaviour and leadership across the school.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

- The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The statement of action sets out an appropriate level of support for the school, sensibly prioritising support to quickly improve mathematics and science. Planned actions are suitably reviewed in consultation with the executive headteacher. The impact of external support is evaluated by the IEB, and reported half-terminally to the local authority. Following the monitoring visit, the lead officer has agreed to review the statement of action with a view to sharpening some details, including the targets for improvement.

- The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

Planned actions are sensibly aligned with the local authority's statement of action. However, planning needs a sharper focus, particularly in regard to review dates and setting measurable outcomes, so that leaders can gauge more systematically the progress made. Plans also need to be expanded so that staff at all levels better understand their key responsibilities and accountabilities for delivering necessary improvements.

- The school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) before the next monitoring inspection.

In discussion, it was agreed that the school has the leadership capability to support a maximum of two NQTs, on condition that collaborative support can be provided by Hellesdon High School.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the IEB, and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector