

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 6799163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com



4 July 2014

Daulton Redmond
RSA Academy
Bliston Road
Gospel Oak
Tipton
DY4 0BZ

Dear Mr Redmond

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to RSA Academy

Following my visit to your school on 3 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 January 2014. 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 that clear, specific milestones are identified so that progress towards success criteria can be measured over the short, medium and long term
- ensure that all teachers routinely expect students to respond to marking and check that skills have been secured in subsequent pieces of work
- increase the focus on ensuring that teaching is enabling the most able to make more rapid progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, other senior leaders and middle leaders, students and a representative of the sponsor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A teleconference was also held with members

of the governing body. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A tour of the school was undertaken and a number of short visits made to classrooms.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the last inspection. However, you have undertaken a re-organisation of roles and responsibilities across the executive and senior leadership teams to better meet the priorities of the academy.

Main findings

You, your leaders and the governing body are taking effective action to address the key areas for improvement identified at the last Ofsted inspection. You have taken a positive approach to ensuring that all staff in the academy are very clear about leaders' high expectations and actively support the academy's agenda for rapid improvement to be good. New processes and systems have been implemented rapidly so that there are already indications that the achievement of students currently in Year 11 will be significantly better than that of previous years.

Planned actions for improvement are well focused on the areas identified at the last inspection and ensure that these priorities can be developed and built on further over time. Those responsible for implementation and monitoring are clearly identified and there is a clear timeline for evaluation and review of impact. However, you now need to ensure that you identify clear, measurable milestones to assess progress towards the targets set.

The academy has reviewed and refined its collection and analysis of assessment information to ensure that all staff and leaders have the data they need for planning and assessment purposes. The quality assurance system in place is rigorous and ensures that all staff know exactly how and when they will be held to account and the systems that will be brought into play where any underperformance is identified. These, including the use of coaching triads, buddies and reviewers have been employed effectively to improve the quality of teaching overall, so that the academy's own records suggest that 80% of teaching is now good or better. As a result of the rigour of performance management and analysis of data, senior leaders now have a realistic view of how well the academy is doing.

Training provided by the academy, delivered by both external and internal presenters, has focused sharply on the priorities for improvement. The programme for training that takes place on a Friday afternoon provides opportunities for both sharing and developing good practice and the strong on-going emphasis on improving literacy for all has had a positive impact. For instance, all staff have accessed training to improve extended writing, regardless of their subject area. Staff have responded very positively because they recognise the impact such skills can have in improving students' outcomes in all areas and how this helps preparations

for the new curriculum. Training has also been provided to support teachers in developing their expertise and confidence to deliver A/A* standard teaching.

Students are all aware of their targets and know what grades or levels they are working at. Many students have a very strong understanding of how their skills in literacy could help them to make progress in other subjects because of the strong emphasis the academy has on improving literacy. However, they are less able to talk about the subject skills they need to improve. This is because not all teachers routinely expect students to respond to marking and, according to students, not all check that targets for improvement have been acted upon in subsequent work. Consequently, not all students see marking as a vehicle for helping them to improve.

The introduction of functional mathematics lessons is having a positive impact on students' engagement with the subject. They now say that they enjoy the subject and talk about how they can apply their skills to real life. Some students are beginning to check their own work more carefully however some are overly reliant on the teacher checking accuracy so that learning time is lost. This is particularly the case where the same task has been provided for all students so that some finish more quickly than others and are then waiting for the next step in their learning.

The academy has invested time and funding in improving the literature choices available for English staff in order to better engage boys. The recent appointment of a librarian has also had a positive impact as competitive activities have been introduced that boys are responding to well. For instance, boys are entering writing competitions and book review competitions. Records kept by the librarian show that boys are now reading in school much more frequently.

The gap in attainment between boys and girls is set to reduce significantly and the gap between students supported by additional funding and others will also close. This is the result of very careful, individualised tracking both of progress and of the impact of interventions. You and your leaders are very keen to learn from the success of this approach by ensuring that a similar system is put into place from Year 7 onwards.

The academy's own records show that this year there will be a significant improvement in the proportion of students achieving 5 A*C GCSEs including English and mathematics and in the number of students who achieve 3 levels of progress in mathematics and English. This is not the case for 4 levels of progress, particularly in English, because there is little evidence as yet of teachers targeting activities to match the ability of students, so that the most able are not given tasks that lack challenge or leave them waiting for peers to catch up.

Governors know the school very well and are very effective in carrying out their role of critical friend. They perceive their function to be to challenge, but also to work strategically with school leaders to find solutions to problems.

The RSA Academies Board has increased its challenge and support of the academy since the last inspection and appropriate monitoring and intervention is now in place. They have reviewed their systems and processes to ensure more rapid identification of risk factors so that intervention can be timelier.

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

You are making good use of support available through the RSA family of schools and through the links you have forged with several universities. The Chair of Governors, in her role as Chief Executive of the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education, is a key driver in enabling academy staff to identify and access research to support further improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sandwell and the Chief Executive of RSA Academies and as below.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector