

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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



13 April 2015

Mr Mark Cottingham  
Headteacher  
Da Vinci Community School  
St Andrew's View  
Breadsall  
Derby  
DE21 4ET

Dear Mr Cottingham

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Da Vinci Community School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 March 2015, 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 November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- sharpen the school improvement plan to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly identified and success criteria are more measurable
- ensure that governors develop their monitoring role so that they have more opportunities to gain first-hand evidence of the work of the school.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, subject leaders, two members of the Governing Body, including the Chair, and also a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and department action plans and reviewed the school's latest information about students' progress. I visited a number of classes with you and spoke with students informally about their work.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, the headteacher has accepted a headship at another school, which begins in September 2015.

## **Main findings**

You and your senior leaders have taken swift action to address the key areas for development identified in the section 5 report. The school improvement plan rightly prioritises the quality of teaching and its impact on the progress of students. The plan identifies an appropriate range of actions, including training and development activities for staff. However, the monitoring and evaluation roles in the plan are not clear, so it is difficult to know who is responsible for ensuring that the objectives are met and the work is quality assured. In addition, the criteria used to measure the success of the plan are not always sharp enough. This means that governors may find it difficult to hold leaders to account effectively.

The proportion of Year 11 students on track to make expected and more than expected progress is now close to national averages in both English and mathematics. Achievement in mathematics, in particular, is improving quickly, as a result of focused work to improve the quality of teaching. Work to improve numeracy skills across the school, especially among younger students, is showing early signs of success.

A comprehensive teacher training and development programme has brought about demonstrable improvements in the classroom. Teachers use students' assessment data to inform their planning and this information is also used to increase the level of challenge for students. In an English lesson seen, for example, students were given carefully chosen tasks by the teacher, based on their identified weaknesses, to help them complete a GCSE examination paper successfully. In mathematics, teachers are increasingly asking more challenging questions to develop thinking skills. Teachers are becoming more consistent in adopting the whole school marking and feedback policy, although variability remains. Some teachers do not always insist on high standards in the presentation and completion of students' work; this is particularly evident in mathematics.

Core subject leaders are growing in confidence. They have revised their departmental action plans, which are now more robust; success criteria are sharp and closely related to students' outcomes. In addition, subject leaders have gained much from the support they have received from local authority subject network meetings and the links forged with Nottingham University. Subject leaders carry out half-termly 'monitoring, review and evaluation' meetings, where they regularly scrutinise the data about students' progress and hold members of their team to account. You and your senior leadership both support and challenge to heads of department. The peer mentoring programme and 'learning networks' (a group of three teachers learning from each other) has allowed teachers to share good practice regularly.

The governing body have taken important steps to improve their effectiveness. They subscribe to the local authority governor development package and engage with training regularly to improve their skills. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, governors have not developed sufficient strategies to gain first-hand evidence of how well the school is doing. This means that they are too reliant on what leaders are telling them. However, the Chair of the Governing Body is aware of this weakness in governance and is reviewing plans to strengthen the monitoring role of governance.

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 school benefits from a range of support provided by the local authority and other providers. The regular quality assurance visits to the school by the local authority representative, provides both challenge and support to you and your senior leadership team. Subject leaders have gained confidence and increased subject expertise through the local subject network meetings. The school's partnership with the Cooperative Trust has helped to drive and improve parental engagement. In addition, Derby City University, a partner in the Trust, has provided effective training for mathematics teachers. Four middle leaders have enrolled onto the Shirebrook Academy Trust's 'women into leadership' training programme. Nottingham University provide good support and training for the teacher trainees and the newly qualified teachers. A teaching school alliance has also recently agreed to provide additional subject leader expert support to the mathematics department.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy