

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 9167
Direct email: farhan.aslam@serco.com



18 May 2015

Mrs Jane Horn
Principal
Cromwell Community College
Wenny Road
Chatteris
Cambridgeshire
PE16 6UU

Dear Mrs Horn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cromwell Community College

Following my visit to your school on Friday 15 May 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 college since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the college was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. 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 college should take further action to:

- make the intended success of tasks in the action plan specific so that leaders and governors can monitor progress in improving the college accurately.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the vice and assistant principals, the chair of the finance committee, English, mathematics and humanities leaders and the new head of the sixth form. We visited classrooms together with the assistant principal, looked at students' books and spoke to them about their work. I also met with a group of Year 9 students to discuss changes that have been made since the previous inspection. I evaluated your action plan, analysed achievement data and information collected from the monitoring of teaching and scrutinised a range of leaders' planning and evaluation documents.

Context

Since the inspection in February, the new head of the sixth form has taken up her post. The head of modern foreign languages and a mathematics teacher have left the college.

Main findings

You have continued to lead the college with evident determination to achieve your ambition for Cromwell to become an outstanding college. Very ably supported in this shared ambition, by the vice and assistant principals, you are making rapid progress in improving the quality of teaching and in raising expectations of students' learning and their engagement in school.

Your action plan is concise and focused on the priorities that will most quickly bring about the improvements required. Responsibilities are clearly defined. Because the measures you are using to judge how well you are making progress in meeting these priorities are not clear enough, it is difficult for other leaders, and particularly governors, to be able to judge whether you are achieving the changes required within the timescales set.

Faculty leaders are much more involved in scrutinising the quality of teaching and students' work. They demonstrated a developing understanding of the quality of teaching in their subjects. This has been established through their increased involvement in, and use of, the rigorous and detailed analyses developed by the assistant principal. Actions are rapidly taken where the quality is not good enough and support is provided to bring about improvement. An emerging strength of this very high quality work is the promotion of the good and outstanding elements of teaching to develop practice where it is weaker.

Students explained clearly how expectations of how well they present their work have been rapidly raised; they also said that the guidance they are given on how to improve their work is becoming more useful, particularly in English.

Faculty leaders are working with teachers to develop new assessment policies that are relevant to their subjects. Teachers' assessments are being reviewed to ensure they are accurate.

Leaders quickly sought an external review of the use of the pupil premium. The vice principal is developing this aspect of the college's work rigorously. He has implemented the recommendations from the review swiftly making changes to further enhance leaders' and governors' understanding of the effectiveness of the extra provision made for eligible students. These students' attendance is improving, aspirations set for them are high and support, including personal mentoring, is continually reviewed. Assessment information shows that the gap between their attainment and that of other students is on track to narrow significantly. Similarly detailed attention has been given to analysing why the achievement of boys lags behind that of girls. A working party has been established to analyse effective strategies for engaging boys more strongly in their learning. Current analysis of boys' achievements suggests they are on track to make significant gains in both English and mathematics in the 2015 examinations.

Leaders in the sixth form have taken action to address the underperformance in vocational subjects caused by changes in staffing last year. Systems in place to monitor teaching are being used with increased rigour to ensure students are challenged to achieve the highest outcomes they can. The ambition is for outcomes in all vocational subjects to match the strong performance in information technology recognised in the previous inspection. The new head of the sixth form has rapidly implemented an action plan to make immediate changes to how well students understand what they need to do to achieve their potential in their exams this year. The plan also implements longer term changes to improve both the teaching and the wider support and advice offered to students.

Governors are seeking ways to maximise how well they use their skills and experience to challenge and support leaders to rapidly improve the college. The chairs of governing body committees have been involved in putting together the action plan and meet with you once a month to review progress. A very comprehensive training plan, bespoke to the college's governors has been drawn up. Over the year, governors will meet with college leaders to better understand key areas of work and how well action plan targets are being met. To do this, plans and agenda for meetings are being redesigned to better focus on priorities.

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

External support

Leaders draw carefully on a range of different support to meet development needs. For example, the work of the governing body has been improved through the ongoing work of an external consultant. This has supported their review of how well they are meeting actions in their action plan. It is also sharpening their ability to understand how well you are meeting improvement priorities. You consult with colleague leaders in other successful schools and are using these developing

relationships well to enhance wider aspects of the college's work. For example, ensuring assessment is accurate in all key stages and faculties through exposing the college's own assessments of students' work to external scrutiny.

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

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- cc. Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- cc. Local authority
- cc. The academy chain where relevant [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- cc. Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- cc. The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk