

Serco
Boundary House
Wythall Green Way
Wythall
B47 6LW

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 683 2048
Victoria.mortimore2@serco.com



14 December 2009

Mr S Goddard
Springwell Community School
Middlecroft Road
Staveley
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S43 3NQ

Dear Mr Goddard

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when my colleague and I inspected your school on 11 December 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during the visit. Please extend my thanks to those members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, students and the chair of governors and local authority representative we met.

A number of new staff have been appointed since the last inspection. For example, all current staff in the mathematics department have been recruited within the last two years. In addition to the existing advanced skills teachers in science and drama, an additional appointment has been made in art and a lead teacher has been appointed in mathematics. In February 2009, the school gained redesignation as a specialist arts college. A new school building is currently being erected on the existing site and the expected completion data is November 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 8-9 December 2008, the school was asked to: raise standards and achievement at the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics; ensure that students are consistently and appropriately challenged and fully engaged in all lessons; ensure that marking provides students with clear guidance on the standard of their work and how to improve; ensure that monitoring and evaluation procedures are firmly embedded in the work of all subject leaders so that they contribute fully to the drive for improvement.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, achievement has improved significantly. The progress students make has improved and, as a result, in 2009 the percentage of students



gaining five GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, rose to 42%, an increase of 14% on the previous year's results. This is above the National Challenge benchmark, but still below the national average. However, current school tracking data indicates that the rising trend will be maintained in next year's results. Other headline figures, including the percentage of students gaining five GCSEs at grade C or above, rose significantly to above the school's own target and national average. Specialist subjects improved, particularly music and art and design. Despite these improvements, achievement in some subjects lags behind, for example in technology, geography, biology and physics.

Teaching and learning have improved and there is a clear strategy, based on highly effective professional development opportunities, to bring about further improvement. Students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are unquestionably good; they enjoy their lessons and participate enthusiastically. Pace and challenge in lessons have improved as a result of inspired senior leadership that has unlocked teachers' skills and their commitment. The school has embedded self and peer assessment into lessons, in particular in arts-related subjects. Students' work is checked and assessed regularly. All students are clear about their targets. Consequently, they know how well they are working at present and what they need to do to improve and meet their targets. Despite much improvement in the quality of marking, some inconsistency remains between teachers and subject departments. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3 in relation to the frequency of marking, the systems for grading effort and achievement and the extent to which students are expected to follow up corrections suggested by teachers.

The degree to which middle leaders are accountable and responsible is improving significantly because effective whole school systems are being introduced. These systems are improving consistency in middle leaders' approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and the progress of students within their departments. There remains some inconsistency in the quality of middle leadership and this is evident in those subject areas where students' achievement has not improved in line with the significant improvement that has occurred overall in 2008/09.

Capacity to improve further is good and improving steadily. Improvements in attainment and progress have resulted from improvements in provision. The school's own rigorous self evaluation suggests it has crossed grade boundaries in key areas, such as teaching and assessment, and this is supported by inspection evidence. The very strong impact of leadership and management at senior leader level, and some areas of middle leader level, has been instrumental in driving improvement across the school and encouraging the commitment of all staff. The effective systems for tackling underperformance in both teaching and students' progress are enabling the school to meet very challenging targets.

The arts college redesignation has been a powerful catalyst for school improvement. It has influenced and enriched the curriculum, is providing enhanced resources for

learning, engaging students and providing very effective professional development for teaching staff. It has been used to engage the community and inspire learning.

The local authority has provided good support and an appropriate level of challenge for the school.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector