

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 9163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com

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Dean Coombes
Headteacher
Deansfield Community School, Specialists In Media Arts
Deans Road
Wolverhampton
WV1 2BH

Dear Mr Coombes

Special measures monitoring inspection of Deansfield Community School, Specialists In Media Arts

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 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 in June 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority commissioned school improvement advisor. The inspector also undertook a learning walk with the head of mathematics, briefly visiting four Year 7 mathematics lessons. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the school was placed in special measures, four teachers have left the school and eight teachers have been appointed. The responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been restructured. A new Chair of the Governing Body is now in post and

a number of new members of the governing body have been recruited to replace others who left.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders have taken prompt action to improve the quality of education provided in the school. However, while many new systems have been introduced, much work is at an early stage of implementation or needs further refinement. As a result, it is too early to judge impact.

More rigorous and focused approaches to monitoring and evaluating the progress of students and the performance of teachers have been introduced. Leaders understand that their judgements about the quality of teaching need to be supported by evidence about the progress and achievement of students. Much attention is being given to improving the quality of teaching overall and, in particular, in mathematics. New marking and feedback policies are now in place. A greater focus on matching work to ability in lesson planning is now a requirement for all teachers. Improving the literacy skills of students, ensuring that teachers build on students' prior knowledge and understanding, and improving the accuracy of teachers' assessment of students' work, are ongoing priorities. The school is addressing a range of curriculum issues noted in the last inspection report. More still needs to be done in this regard to ensure that sufficient subject specialist teachers are available to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets all national requirements.

The new Chair of the Governing Body has taken a strong lead in revising the structure of the governing body and the accountability of its members. The new Chair and additional new members have significantly improved the expertise of the governing body and the level of challenge and support it provides to school leaders. This follows a timely and thorough review of governance, with a particular focus on the use of pupil premium funding.

External support from the school improvement advisor, commissioned by the local authority, is good. He is helping school leaders to focus clearly on key areas to improve and is guiding them in ensuring the accuracy of their own judgements. However, leaders need to develop more links with good and outstanding schools in order to understand what best practice looks like.

The school's improvement plan links closely to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report, with clear timelines for action. School leaders now need to work with the school improvement advisor to review the plan to ensure that it is more sharply focused on key priorities and can be used as a working document

against which to monitor progress and evaluate impact at whole-school and departmental level.

The local authority's statement of action indicates that, in addition to the school improvement advisor, much support will be provided by other schools with the local authority 'brokering a relationship with other schools as necessary'. This has not taken place and thus the statement of action, in this respect, does not reflect the support provided for the school.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school must contact the monitoring HMI to discuss and agree any plans it might have to appoint newly qualified teachers to specific departments before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gwendoline Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector