

Serco Inspections  
Colmore Plaza  
20 Colmore Circus Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0121 679 9167  
**Direct email:** farhan.aslam@serco.com

5 June 2015

Mr Stuart Reynolds  
Headteacher  
Futures Community College  
Southchurch Boulevard  
Southend-on-Sea  
SS2 4UY

Dear Mr Reynolds

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Futures Community College**

Following my visit with Beverley Johnston, Additional Inspector, to your school on 3–4 June 2015, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:  
The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. Appointment of newly qualified teachers can be made following discussions with me.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Education funding agency, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children’s Services for Southend-on-Sea.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of the Interim Executive Board for Futures Community College

cc. Simon Leftley, Director of Children's Services for Southend-on-Sea

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards and enable all groups of students to make at least expected progress in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - teachers make effective use of assessment information and plan lessons that take account of what students know and can do, and what they need to improve
  - teaching in all subjects contributes to developing students' basic skills, particularly in writing
  - marking improves throughout the school to match the good practice which exists in some subjects.
  
- Strengthen the effectiveness of all leaders and the interim executive board by:
  - revising the systems for checking students' attainment and progress so they provide accurate information for use by students, teachers and leaders in planning for further improvement
  - evaluating the impact on achievement of all new initiatives and broadening the programmes of study in the sixth form
  - strengthening leadership in mathematics and science
  - ensuring teaching staff are suitably trained and reducing the number of cover and supply teachers used
  - improving systems for checking behaviour so that all students feel safe in school
  - ensuring that all staff implement the school's behaviour policy consistently
  - taking students' progress into account when evaluating the quality of teaching
  - ensuring that the interim executive board monitors the school's effectiveness and holds leaders and managers to account for students' attainment and progress.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 3–4 June 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors visited lessons, many jointly with members of the school's middle and senior leaders, and evaluated learning in students' books. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents including: the school's monitoring of its own work, students' progress and attendance data, records of meetings, behaviour logs and the single central record. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, groups of students, the Chair and two other members of the Interim Executive Board, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also considered responses from 78 staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit in February 2015, the assistant head of mathematics has left and a new teacher took on this role in April. An assistant head with responsibility for English and literacy joined the school in May, and an English tutor was appointed in April. Five teachers will leave at the end of this term and six will join in September. In addition, a deputy head and one middle leader are due to go on maternity leave very soon.

The sixth form will close in September 2015.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

All Year 11 students remain in school during their study leave, experiencing a range of intensive revision classes prior to their examinations. Evidence from a sample of these lessons, as well as school data, show achievement is improving. In English, Year 11 students have greatly accelerated their progress rates. In mathematics, although students' achievement is higher than last year, the vast amount of learning missed in earlier years limits their progress. The English and mathematics tutors provide regular support to individual students to further enhance their achievement. The reading programme is contributing to higher reading levels, with some very good gains being made by students across the school.

The progress disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making has improved because of the careful support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. In an English lesson, lower-ability students crafted a well-thought-out analysis of a challenging poem and gave mature feedback to each other as to how their analysis could be improved further. While evidence of stretching the most-able students is seen, for example in science, they are still not making as much progress as they are capable of. Achievement is also hindered when teachers set work that is too easy, as was seen in Key Stage 3 lessons in particular.

The achievement of looked-after children, some of whom are receiving regular one-to-one tuition, is being monitored well through revised educational plans. Case studies and the school's data show many individuals are making good progress.

Students' achievement is higher in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 in many subjects. This is partly due to the conscious decision to commit resources and the most effective teachers in order to improve standards for students taking external examinations. Senior and middle leaders now have to ensure achievement improves across the school.

## **The quality of teaching**

Although the quality of teaching is improving, it remains inconsistent in its effectiveness across and within departments. Too much variability exists in teaching across the school. As a result, students can experience highly effective teaching which is well-structured and challenging, as well as teaching that is undemanding, inaccurately pitched, or which fails to develop students' skills in a systematic way over time. A contributory factor in less effective teaching is the lack of skills of some teachers in managing behaviour; the absence of planning of systematic progression of skills in subjects; and expectations that are not high enough. Teachers are not regularly using assessment information about their students to plan lessons that are appropriately demanding for different groups of students, including the most able.

Teaching assistants are well-briefed on individual students' needs and were observed on several occasions providing good support for students who need it. However, they do not always call on the specialist knowledge of the class teacher when it is needed.

Although schemes of work have been developed, they are not all of a consistently high quality. Some, including in mathematics, have not taken on board fully the changes to the new Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Students understand their 'comfort' and 'target' levels and are clear that teachers expect them to be aiming for the higher level. However, there are instances where students' books show they have attained higher levels than the targets they are supposed to be aiming for. Teachers are not then revising students' targets. Marking by teachers is regular and often gives clear guidance on how to improve, and is beginning to include literacy-specific marking. Homework is not regularly set. Senior leaders have recently introduced a new system to address this.

The new focus on literacy is helping to ensure expectations of students' work are higher and teachers now have greater understanding of how to improve students' writing. However, this is a new focus and is not embedded across the curriculum. Teachers are providing more opportunities for oracy in lessons and using questioning

to push this further, for example, in drama and humanities. This more demanding work was less evident in music and modern foreign languages.

Teachers show commendable commitment to improving students' achievement rates and have delivered classes before and after school and at weekends. They have also made themselves available during half term. This dedication is really appreciated by students.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students are quite clear that behaviour in the school is much improved. In and outside of lessons, inspectors observed many polite, friendly and courteous students who engage with their work in a serious fashion. Some students were observed reading for pleasure in the playground and were positive about the whole-school reading focus. The perseverance of students who struggle with reading but commit to improving this in the morning library sessions is commendable.

Students' maturity and ever-improving attitudes to learning are seen in the feedback they gave to inspectors, which included a desire to be set revision topics more frequently. It was also seen in cooperative and enthusiastic group work, where students gave and received constructive criticism of each other. Having established the basics of behaviour, senior leaders now need to capitalise on these more mature attitudes by making explicit to students the attributes of excellent learners.

Students are very appreciative of the support teachers provide to them. They thrive on the celebration of their success, which include academic as well as sporting achievements. The focus on improving attendance since the last inspection is evident and is resulting in attendance figures now getting closer to national rates. This represents a reversal of the decline seen at the last inspection.

Exclusions have reduced substantially. This is a testament to the school's emphasis on valuing all children. A small minority of students disrupt the learning of others. School leaders need to ensure that these students are supported to improve quickly and that they do not compromise the progress made in improving behaviour overall. The behaviour of this group was also a concern raised by teachers in response to the staff questionnaire.

## **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

Key issues identified in the previous monitoring inspection regarding the development of literacy and improving attendance have been addressed with pace. Senior leaders demonstrate good understanding about how to improve literacy across the school but this initiative is in its early days. Key aspects of the school's work, including the quality of teaching and student achievement, are improving but developments remain fragile.

The headteacher continues to take tough decisions in order to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and much time is taken up on recruitment. There remains a high level of staff turnover; a concern also raised by Key Stage 3 students. Despite a change in the leadership of the subject, there is more staffing stability in English, contributing to stronger teaching and higher achievement of students. Teachers in the department demonstrate much more consistency of practice and are starting to take ownership of their own professional development. Staffing in mathematics and science departments is also now more stable.

Joint lessons observations with several middle leaders show they are skilled at identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching. This also demonstrates that senior leaders are able to delegate responsibility for school improvement to subject leaders and heads of years. The challenge for these middle leaders is to ensure there is consistency in their departments regarding the quality of teaching and how teachers manage behaviour.

Initiatives to improve teaching have developed further since the previous monitoring inspection. Staff are positive about the fortnightly training sessions, which have now been enhanced by peer coaching sessions facilitated by an external consultant. Teachers report that non-graded lesson observations and opportunities to talk about teaching are valuable, and are driving up its quality. A new plan, based on a good understanding of strengths and weakness in teaching, is in place to develop teaching further. However, with the departure of the deputy headteacher leading in this area, progress is very fragile. It is crucial that improvements in teaching do not falter and this area is led effectively.

A half-termly assessment system to track students' progress is in place which is supported by internal and external moderation. However, there is potential for confusion as to what senior leaders are expecting teachers to do in terms of reporting on students' attainment from next term, given that several systems are being combined.

The interim executive board (IEB) is providing good support in relation to the management of school finances. The work of the IEB has been enhanced by the addition of an experienced headteacher who has a clear focus on teaching and learning. Although they challenge school leaders, currently, the minutes of the IEB do not show that members set a clear and coherent direction for the school. Senior leaders have demonstrated that when this is done they respond swiftly and to good effect. The main priorities now for the school include eradicating the poor behaviour of a minority of students and a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching.

## **External support**

The local authority acted swiftly to address the shortcomings identified in the last monitoring visit and the subsequent five-week plan has injected the pace required. The local authority has increased its support for improving attendance and facilitated a new consultant, who is making a positive difference. However, the school needs clarity on the resources it has available to it in order to inform longer-term planning.

Further action is required in supporting the school with managing the behaviour of its most challenging students and ensuring there is clear leadership of teaching.