

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

Ofsted
T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Serco
Direct T 0121 683 3888



17 June 2011

Mr Anthony Nelson (Acting Headteacher)
Roade School Sports College
Stratford Road
Roade
Northampton
NN7 2LP

Dear Mr Nelson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Roade School Sports College

Following my visit to your school on 15 June 2011, with additional inspectors Isobel Randall and David Lewis, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010

- Improve behaviour and eliminate disruption in lessons by ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is applied consistently by all staff.
- Raise the quality of teaching to improve the progress of all students, but especially boys, by ensuring that teachers consistently provide stimulating activities that engage students and are suitably challenging for all levels of ability and ensuring that work is marked regularly and constructively so that students are always clear about how to improve their work.
- Strengthen leadership at all levels by ensuring leaders are provided with the time and training necessary to build up their skills so they can fulfil their role in school improvement and monitor performance in their areas of responsibility rigorously to reduce variability and improve provision.

Special measures: monitoring of Roade School Sports College

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 15 June 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the associate headteacher and acting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and chair of the joint governing body working party, a representative from the local authority, members of staff and groups of students. The monitoring inspection focused on the improvement issues identified at the last inspection and third monitoring visit on behaviour, the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management.

Context

Since the third monitoring visit, proposals to amalgamate with a neighbouring school have been accepted by both schools' governing bodies and there is now a period of public consultation. If the amalgamation is approved the school will close and reopen under a new name in September 2011. A number of new teaching appointments have been made in a range of subjects to start in September 2011. It was not possible for inspectors to see any Year 11 lessons as Year 11 students had commenced their study leave.

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Current Year 11 students achieved standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 that were broadly average. The 'gaining ground' initiative has enabled English and mathematics departments to forecast more accurately outcomes at GCSE have been successful. Current data indicates that students should achieve broadly average standards in the proportion attaining five good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. This represents satisfactory progress. The strong focus on raising students' achievement in English and mathematics to at least a grade C at GCSE has led to less emphasis on ensuring as many students as possible achieve the highest possible A* and A grades. The school is also aware that some students who achieve C grades in English and mathematics as a result of additional support struggle to make the transition to demanding AS level courses in the sixth form.

The progress of students in lessons seen by inspectors was determined by the quality of teaching and teachers' ability to manage behaviour. As the school pushes forward with developing independent learning, students enjoy those lessons where teachers fully understand how to enable them to take responsibility for their learning. Students respond positively and enjoy their work. Where teachers are not as secure in developing independent learning, students at times do not remain on task and this hampers their progress. In some lessons, boys' misbehaviour leads teachers to allow them to dominate discussions to the exclusion of girls.

Other relevant student outcomes

Behaviour

In an increasing number of lessons where students are given responsibility and make choices about their learning, the large majority respond with positive attitudes. The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently by most teachers. Around the school, students are orderly and well behaved and during the inspection they responded sensibly to an unplanned fire alarm at lunchtime. Students continue to be proud of the rewards room and feel that the rewards are appropriate to their ages. They have responded well to opportunities to be involved in planning and decision making for the new school. Students, particularly boys, are very positive towards the school's subject specialism of sport but, for some, this does not translate into enthusiasm for other subjects particularly less practical subjects where there is less active learning.

Misbehaviour in lessons is mostly confined to those lessons where teaching is inadequate and where strategies to manage behaviour are not sufficiently effective. In these lessons, teachers either over apply the school's behaviour code which does not have an impact on students' behaviour or choose to ignore instances of poor behaviour. There remains some silliness and immaturity particularly among a minority of younger boys. Some older students, whilst not disruptive, have a casual and relaxed attitude to learning which is not always sufficiently challenged by teachers.

Judgement

- Improve behaviour and eliminate disruption in lessons by ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is applied consistently by all staff - good

Provision

Teachers are increasingly taking risks in their teaching in letting students take greater responsibility for their learning. Teachers and support assistants allow students to think for themselves to find solutions rather than simply providing the answer when a student gets stuck. The school's sports specialism has led by example in driving forward the move towards students being able to take responsibility for their learning based on student-centred statements. These include 'knowing where I am going', 'how I am going to get there', 'how to get myself unstuck' and 'knowing I am going in the right direction'. Students themselves are being encouraged as leaders and, in the classroom, there are increasing instances of students at the front leading learning and taking answers from their peers. There is far less teacher-led activity and lessons are rarely boring. In the best lessons, students are now flying with their learning and have become less dependent on teachers for information.

The extent to which all teachers understand independent learning and can communicate it to students varies but nearly all teachers are using these strategies in the classroom. There are some lessons where although students have been set independent tasks, they do not fully understand how to achieve them and teachers find it difficult to ensure all students are engaged when working on their own or in small groups. Not all teachers are confident to adapt and be flexible if the strategy of independent learning does not work with particular groups or individuals.

Teachers consistently share lesson objectives and success criteria with students so that they can see how well they are doing. Teachers use peer marking effectively and this is appreciated by students who see how through marking someone else's work this can help with their own learning. Most students know their current level or grade and can explain the next step in their learning. Marking is increasingly giving students feedback about how they could improve their work although there is insufficient opportunity for them to respond to teachers' written comments and questions. Some students, although being encouraged to look at the skills required for the highest grades at GCSE, are content to settle for lower grades and are not always sufficiently challenged to stretch themselves.

Judgement

- Raise the quality of teaching to improve the progress of all students, but especially boys, by ensuring that teachers consistently provide stimulating activities that engage students and are suitably challenging for all levels of ability and ensuring that work is marked regularly and constructively so that

students are always clear about how to improve their work – satisfactory

- Ensure that teachers give more opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning by ensuring they can work independently and make informed choices about their work - satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have risen to the twin challenge of responding to the issues arising from being placed in special measures while at the same time preparing for the school's proposed amalgamation in September. A number of new teaching appointments have been made for September whose benefits will not impact until the Autumn term. Monitoring of teaching is rigorous and leaders at all levels including middle leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Monitoring of teaching has led to improvements in provision with the most vulnerable teachers placed on a support plan. The coaching of targeted members of staff by senior leaders and members of the school's physical education department has led to teachers delivering more consistently good lessons. The sports subject specialism has also been influential in providing literacy support linked to physical education for students in Years 8 and 9 who are at risk of falling behind. Monitoring the impact of this on their achievement is at an early stage of development, however, although feedback from students is positive. Where support has been withdrawn from teachers on support plans too soon before their lessons are securely satisfactory or good, there has been some regression. The school recognises the need for follow-up for teachers once support plans have been withdrawn.

Much of the work with departments has focused on strengthening leadership in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. As part of the plans for the amalgamated school a new faculty structure has been designed linking core subjects with other subjects to improve communication and develop innovation in the curriculum. At present the core subjects do not have sufficient capacity to take on leadership of those subjects that are underperforming. Despite continuing weaknesses in the leadership and management of technology, provision in lessons has been stabilised by the school and all teaching seen in the subject in the recent monitoring visit was at least satisfactory. Leaders of the sixth form have taken greater responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching in Key Stage 5. Effective monitoring is ensuring teachers are fully preparing students for the transition from Key Stage 4 by developing the independent thinking skills needed to pursue AS level courses.

The governing body has continued to exert greater influence in supporting the school and holding it to account. Its effectiveness has been enhanced by the joint working party with the governing body of a neighbouring school. The school has successfully retained the support of most parents and carers during a period of rapid

change. In consultations with parents and carers, the large majority have been positive about the direction the school is taking.

Judgement

- Strengthen leadership at all levels by ensuring leaders are provided with the time and training necessary to build up their skills so they can fulfil their role in school improvement and monitor performance in their areas of responsibility rigorously to reduce variability and improve provision - satisfactory
- Ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning by middle leaders is consistently rigorous and accurate so that it leads to teaching that is always at least satisfactory - satisfactory

External support

The local authority has continued to withdraw its support as the school has grown in confidence and in capacity to the extent that the seconded additional deputy headteacher roles will finish at the end of June. The local authority's role has now moved more on towards working with the school on the logistics of the proposed merger rather than providing support. It is continuing to monitor closely outcomes for students currently at the school which it is doing effectively.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that middle leaders, who are now accurately monitoring the quality of teaching, place a greater emphasis on the quality of what students have learnt and why.
- Ensure that teachers who have received support plans continue to be monitored once support is withdrawn to ensure that improvements in teaching are secure.
- Ensure that all teachers understand how to enable all groups of students to work independently.