

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Serco**  
Direct T 0121 683 3888



15 July 2011

Mrs Ruth Robinson  
North Oxfordshire Academy  
Drayton Road  
Banbury  
OX16 0UD

Dear Mrs Robinson

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of North Oxfordshire Academy**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Kevin Harrison, additional inspector, and I inspected your school on 14 July 2011, for the time Karen Stokes gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I am also grateful for the co-operation of staff, students and the governor that I spoke to on the telephone for their help during the inspection and the welcome that they gave us. Please pass on my thanks to them all.

Since the last inspection, adjustments have been made to the senior leadership team, the number of teachers has increased by almost a third to take account of the increase in student numbers by over 230. In addition, changes have been made to the curriculum in English, humanities, art and design technology.

As a result of the inspection on 27–28 January 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. 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.

The strong emphasis that the academy has placed on improving student achievement is bearing fruit and, although the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, remains slightly below that found nationally, it has increased steadily over the last two years. In 2010, it was 13% higher than in 2009, and predictions suggest that this will have improved by a further 10% for the current Year 11 group. Inspection evidence confirms the accuracy of the academy's detailed and rigorous assessment systems which are used to analyse the progress of groups and individual students. The outcome of this analysis is used very effectively to identify where interventions are

September 2010



needed. As a result, students' academic progress throughout the academy has accelerated. Students have good attitudes towards their learning and attendance has improved considerably across the academy, especially in the sixth form, where students now engage positively in their learning. Attainment in the sixth form is improving and the pass rate for the International Baccalaureate pass rate in 2011 is 75%.

A key factor in the academy's good progress in raising standards has been the significant improvement in the quality of teaching. Inspectors observed lessons that featured clear planning that took good account of the range of students' abilities, very good relationships and a range of interesting activities which effectively engaged the students. As a result, behaviour was good and individual feedback to students demonstrated teachers' commitment to meeting their needs. Information and communication technology was used imaginatively to support teaching and learning. Where teaching was less effective, the pace was too slow and there was a lack of challenge, for example in teachers' questioning of students. Extensive, detailed and evaluative monitoring by the academy suggests that the percentage of good or better lessons has increased considerably since the last inspection, which supports the inspectors' view that good progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of teaching.

The role of middle managers has been considerably enhanced since the last inspection and they have a clear view of how to drive improvement forward. This has been achieved by targeted support and guidance, for example through coaching, from both senior leaders and external consultants. Leaders have developed monitoring systems which accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in their own areas of responsibility. Strategic planning identifies suitable priorities and actions, although in some faculty plans it is not always made sufficiently clear how success will be measured in terms of outcomes for students.

The role of the governing body has been clarified and it is kept very well informed. Recent initiatives, such as the introduction of link governors for each faculty, are increasing the governing body's awareness of progress and are enabling it to more accurately evaluate the impact of its policies. Improvements have also had a positive impact on the academy's specialist status as an international school and careers academy. Training brokered by the sponsor and the wide-ranging support from the local authority have been particularly successful in helping academy staff, at all levels, to drive improvements forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Nye  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

September 2010

## Annex

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

- Raise achievement of all students by ensuring:
  - the percentage of students obtaining the equivalent of five or more GCSE A\* to C grades including English and mathematics is at least in line with that found nationally
  - improved engagement of students in the sixth form
  - the teaching of all lessons is as inspiring and effective as existing good and outstanding practice
  - middle managers drive improvements and develop their capacity to identify and implement appropriate interventions particularly with raising the quality of teaching further.
  
- Ensure that governors rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of policies to bring about sustained improvements for all stakeholders.