

11 November 2014

Mr S Allen
Principal
The de Ferrers Academy
St Mary's Drive
Burton-on-Trent
DE13 0LL

Dear Mr Allen

Short inspection of The de Ferrers Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 November with Chris Chapman AI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out under section 5 of the 2006 Education Act (as amended) since the Academy was judged to be good in April 2012.

During the inspection, we spoke with the Principal and other senior staff, the head of science and head of sixth form, students from different year groups and the Chair of the Governing Body with three other governors. We visited classrooms and scrutinised students' books, and discussed the Academy's recent performance data. We noted the analysis of 186 recent responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View.

This Academy continues to be a good school.

The Academy's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The Academy has the following strengths.

- Effective strategic and senior leadership has continuously driven rising academic standards since the previous inspection in April 2012. The primary feature behind this improvement is the detailed, regular assessment and monitoring of student progress that informs teachers' planning and also additional individual student support.
- The historic underachievement in GCSE science courses has been eliminated, through changes to the curriculum. For the Year 11 of 2014, these changes ensured a substantial rise in the proportion of students gaining A* to C science GCSE's to well above the National average. The current Year's 10 and 11 have more science teaching time per week, which is likely to address the relatively low proportion of students who gained the very highest A*/A science grades in 2014.

- In 2013, the overall progress of students from their starting points was above average although not significantly so. The figures for 2014 are not currently available, but Academy data shows improvements in the proportion of students making the expected 3 levels of progress in English and mathematics, and similar gains in the proportions exceeding this threshold.
- The average A-level points score per subject, and per student, has risen year by year since 2012. The progress made by these students can be measured in a variety of ways, one of which (ALPS) suggests this is now better than average. Other measures (Ofsted) show that, for academic subjects, progress is in line with average.
- Inspectors noted effective teacher-student dialogue in the small sample of lessons observed, that promotes good or better learning. This allows teachers to adjust their input to accommodate different students' rates of progress. In the best examples, students have high levels of autonomy, coupled to challenging activities, that encourages students to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding to new situations.
- All Key Stage 4 and sixth form students are issued with iPads. These are in constant use, with some exceptionally innovative practice evident, for example, in mathematics. Students submit images of their handwritten work, which teachers electronically mark with developmental feedback; this can be spoken individual feedback explaining the steps to solve a problem. In other subjects, instant access to research and information accelerates learning and allows students to use the most up to date information to illustrate phenomena such as earthquakes and volcanoes.
- Students enjoy learning, know how to improve their work, try hard to do so and appreciate the mix of additional support available if they need it. All Year 11 students in 2014 moved into education or training.
- Attendance and other indicators of positive student behaviour are above average, including low levels of exclusion and consistent resolution of the rare bullying incidents.

Areas for further development

- Further improve the consistency of marking and feedback so that students take immediate action to correct, improve or complete their work.
- Ensure questions by teachers promote complex and well-thought out explanations by students, in a setting that ensures every student is participating in discussions.

I hope the short inspection will support your work to improve the Academy.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright

Her Majesty's Inspector