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18 November 2010

Mr Rob Rossides  
Interim Headteacher  
Ecclesfield School  
Chapeltown Road  
Ecclesfield  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S35 9WD

Dear Mr Rossides

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Ecclesfield School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 November 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. I would also like to thank the governor and School Improvement Partner who gave up time to speak with me and to send special thanks to students who met with me at lunchtime.

There have been considerable changes in leadership since the last inspection. The headteacher retired in October and the associate headteacher, who had worked with the senior team since the inspection, was appointed as interim headteacher to the end of 2011. Other changes include the appointment of two deputy headteachers, an assistant headteacher and two temporary assistant headteachers. Three new governors have also been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 10 March 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Strategies were introduced in the summer to address issues identified in the inspection but the pace of improvement has increased since September. The new senior leaders have brought fresh energy that has galvanised the rest of the team. The interim headteacher is very experienced and has a clear vision for the future of the school. He is building the capacity of leaders at all levels and driving improvements at a well-judged and quickening pace. There is increasing optimism among staff.

The Key Stage 4 results in 2010 show overall improvement on the previous year. The proportion of students achieving five high grade GCSE passes increased by nine percentage points. Attainment in English did not improve, however, and although there was an increase in proportion of Year 11 students obtaining five high grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, the figure remains below average. Current tracking data suggest that progress is improving across the school, including in English and mathematics. Improvements in attendance and behaviour are having a positive impact on learning. Closer monitoring of students as they work towards more challenging targets is also helping to accelerate progress and students report they are working harder than before.

Leaders and managers have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Lesson observation records and successive reviews by the local authority show an increase in the amount of good or better teaching since the inspection. Senior leaders are more sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning and there are clear lines of accountability between classroom teachers, heads of department and senior leaders. Middle leaders are more accountable and involved in quality reviews across the school, facilitating the spread of good practice. Performance management has been tightened and decisive action taken to tackle under-performance.

A new assistant headteacher is leading the development of teaching and learning. He is supported by lead teachers who are focused on challenging the most-able students and extending the use of assessment to support learning. There is a wide range of professional development including a coaching and mentoring programme. Teachers are increasingly keen to improve their practice with a growing number attending development sessions in their own time and volunteering for the peer observation scheme. Good practice within Ecclesfield is being shared more effectively and the school is building closer links with other schools across the city in order to garner best practice.

New members of the governing body are bringing valuable expertise and governors have received training in interpreting data and in ways to enable the governing body to operate more efficiently. Senior and middle leaders say that the governing body is already challenging under-performance more robustly.

Systems to improve the use of data have been introduced and data reports are being refined in response to feedback from staff. Better analysis of data has already highlighted emerging concerns thus enabling leaders and teachers to take early action. Teachers are starting to use data to plan lessons that are tailored more closely to students' needs. Work scrutiny is being used to improve the quality of written feedback and some excellent practice is emerging but the quality of marking is still too variable.

The specialism is contributing extremely well to the improvements. Teachers from the specialist subjects are spreading good practice by leading training sessions and acting as mentors. The specialist subjects also play an important role in students' personal development and in curriculum innovation across the school.

The school is receiving good support from the local authority and its School Improvement Partner that is well-targeted. The local authority's statement of action is thorough and fit for purpose

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

Jan Bennett  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress by:
  - increasing the level of challenge in lessons so that students, particularly the most-able, make greater gains in their knowledge and understanding
  - raising expectations of the quality of teachers' feedback to students in order to achieve consistency of practice within and between departments
  - ensuring that all teachers are skilled in using strategies to support learning
  - making better use of the good and better teaching that exists in the school to improve practice more rapidly.
  
- Ensure that leadership and management have a greater impact on the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - prioritising actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning and agreeing measurable success criteria
  - increasing the proportion of lessons in which students make good or better progress in learning
  - reviewing the process of target setting at whole-school level so that it becomes a more effective tool with which to raise the attainment of individuals and groups
  - increasing the level of challenge from the governing body to ensure that all the school's improvement work has the intended impact.