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Mr P Daley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Daley

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with an additional focus on behaviour:
Clifton: A Community Arts School**

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and the students gave when I inspected your school on 27 March 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the school has seen a rapid increase in students from Eastern Europe, mainly Slovakian and Roma. During this school year, 70 students have arrived in different year groups, many with limited English and experience of schooling. This group of recent arrivals makes up seven per cent of the school population.

As a result of the inspection in November 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and the effectiveness of the school in improving students' behaviour is satisfactory.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In 2011, the school closed the gap between the school's results and the national average, particularly in English and mathematics, by increasing the number of students who achieved the higher grades, A* to C. The proportion gaining at least a grade C in both English and mathematics has risen rapidly over the last three years. Assessment data indicate that the school is on track to consolidate these results in 2012. Results in English and mathematics, which had risen in 2010, did not increase further in 2011, although students did gain additional points for adult literacy and numeracy.

The proportion of students who made expected progress had improved significantly at the time of the last inspection and this was consolidated in 2011. The proportions of high, middle and lower ability students making the predicted progress in gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, were in line with national averages. Due

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

to the focus on the C/D borderline, middle ability students made better progress than higher and lower ability students. In the current school year, senior leaders and the leaders of English and mathematics have had a rigorous and effective focus on promoting the progress of students of all abilities. School assessment shows that higher and lower ability students in Year 11 are making better progress in mathematics and English in 2012.

The quality of teaching

Effective strategies for sharing good practice have been instrumental in bringing about improvements in teaching. Increasingly, these have been focused on the needs of particular teachers. Individual staff whose teaching had been identified as satisfactory were able to explain and illustrate how their planning and use of resources had improved and how their lessons were meeting the range of students' needs better. Observation of lessons confirmed the improvement by individual teachers. Regular and targeted coaching within and across departments has involved a wide range of staff and has promoted a positive culture of professional learning within the school. The use of advanced skills teachers, specialist school arts practitioners and outstanding teachers has been effective in extending the use of practical and imaginative activities to challenge students and involve them in independent learning. For example, students in Year 7 talked positively about the increased opportunities in mathematics to learn about surface area by building a rocket and to make graphs and charts from their surveys about fair trade. Home learning projects in Year 7, linked to the thematic studies day, also provide good opportunities to work independently on an extended piece of work. Expectations of progress have been raised at Key Stage 3 and students said they appreciated the higher level of challenge, including in mathematics.

These improvements were confirmed in the observation of the better lessons where teaching communicated high expectations, challenges were directed at different levels of ability and well-targeted questioning kept students on their toes. Good teaching was observed in a class of students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, where tasks were accurately pitched to students' levels of literacy. However, the professional development activities have not had universal impact. In some observed lessons, there was too much routine and passive learning and this seems more frequent in lower ability classes and at Key Stage 4. These duller lessons typically follow a pattern of teacher talk, a set written exercise, followed by the checking of answers. Activities demonstrate a lack of pace, challenge and inspiration: tasks are too open-ended with little modelling of what is expected; there are few criteria for students to know how to succeed; and deadlines are undemanding.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students say that behaviour has improved in lessons, which has helped their learning. They also say that the reward system provides effective incentives for positive behaviour. The atmosphere in the school is calm and purposeful. Behaviour at social times around the school site is orderly and well supervised. Students say that occasional incidents of bullying are dealt with well. In observed lessons, students generally showed positive attitudes to

learning and behaviour was well managed by staff. However, exclusions remain high and have increased in the last school year. White British boys and students with special educational needs supported by school action plus continue to be excluded at a disproportionate rate. Internal exclusion has also increased markedly because of a new uniform policy which is being rigorously enforced. Attendance dipped in 2011 but has recovered this year, although the gap with national rates of attendance has widened since the last inspection. Students are aware of attendance targets and value the rewards for good attendance. Recently arrived students from Eastern Europe attend less well than other groups but this only partially accounts for the dip in attendance. However, this group has contributed to a marked increase in the already high levels of persistent absence. The school works effectively with the wider community to develop confidence and aspiration, for example, through family learning days and by promoting family involvement in homework projects. The school has a range of strategies for working with students and their families, with the support of other agencies, but these have not reduced levels of exclusion or persistent absence. The analysis and evaluation of data relating to behaviour and attendance have weaknesses. Leaders were not able to provide a clear analysis of patterns or trends and there was limited evidence to show how data had been used to inform actions to reduce exclusions.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Leaders and managers have taken strong and effective action to improve achievement through rigorous monitoring and evaluation and by well-targeted action to improve student progress and the performance of departments. The local authority has made an effective contribution to the regular review of student progress. The learning of students has improved as a result of an increased amount of good teaching, a reduction in inadequate teaching and the use of a better range of teaching strategies. A concerted and well-planned approach to professional development and the management of performance have led to increasingly well-targeted support for staff to improve the quality of teaching. This helpfully includes the use of video to review the quality of teaching and learning. Effective steps have been taken to improve behaviour and the climate for learning. However, the monitoring and evaluation of attendance and exclusions are not sufficiently rigorous and, as a result, progress in improving these aspects is more limited.

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

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Close the gap between the school's results and the national average, particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - increasing the number of students who achieve at the higher grades of A* to C
 - increasing the proportion of students who make good progress across all grades to improve the average point score for each subject.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - sharing more widely the best practice seen, for example, in the school's specialist subjects and themed curriculum
 - ensuring lessons are planned to develop more independent learning skills, to stretch the more able throughout the lesson and to develop students' resilience to keep going when tackling more extended writing or other work
 - ensuring work is set in more practical and challenging contexts as well as to meet examination requirements.
- Develop the work with students, parent and carers to raise further their confidence and aspirations by:
 - securing a better understanding of the importance of attending school regularly
 - ensuring students are able to assess for themselves how well their behaviour is supporting their learning in lessons.