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20 November 2012

Mr P Daley
Clifton: A Community Arts School
Middle Lane
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S65 2SN

Dear Mr Daley

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Clifton: A Community Arts School

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, and the consultant headteacher appointed by the local authority to work with the school. The school improvement plan was evaluated, and the latest learning review data was scrutinised as were the minutes of the most recent governors' meetings. A tour of the school, which included visits to a number of lessons, was also undertaken.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been no changes in staffing. However, the Chair of the Governing Body has stood down from this position and the vice chair has taken up this role. This is an interim measure pending a review of the governing body's current structure and working procedures.

Main findings

Senior leaders have responded promptly to the outcomes of the inspection and the school improvement plan has been amended to focus on the most important actions which will bring about the necessary improvements. In addition, as recommended by the inspection team, the plan now includes measurable targets by which the governing body and local authority can hold senior leaders more effectively to account. Senior leaders are clear about what needs to be done and there is a common sense of purpose and urgency to undertake the most appropriate actions to bring about speedy improvement.

The governing body is committed to ensuring that the school is judged to be at least good at the next inspection. However, governors acknowledge that they are not challenging school leaders on all aspects of school improvement with equal effectiveness. Although there is limited reference in the improvement plan to developing their role, initial plans are being drawn up to ensure governors are more able to challenge and support school leaders.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- strengthen the role of the governing body by arranging additional training and guidance and ensure that the improvement plan reflects the work undertaken to achieve this.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority is providing effective support for school leaders who particularly appreciate the challenge and expertise brought to their work by the consultant headteacher. For example, they welcome her current involvement in helping to broker appropriate external support for the school in line with its improvement priority involving mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Rotherham and as below.

Yours sincerely

Michael Maddison
Her Majesty's Inspector