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11 June 2015

Mr David Hudson  
Executive Headteacher  
Clifton Community School  
Middle Lane  
Rotherham  
South Yorkshire  
S65 2SN

Dear Mr Hudson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Clifton Community School**

Following my visit with Henry Moreton, Additional Inspector and Edwin De Middelaer, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good and students progress well in all subjects in all year groups, particularly in English and mathematics by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve, and challenging and supporting all students to reach their full potential
  - improving the support for students with special educational needs, particularly to improve their literacy and writing skills
  - improving teachers' monitoring of students' progress and ensuring students know how to improve their work and learning
  - ensuring teachers make accurate assessments of students' learning and use these to inform the planning of their lessons to best meet students' needs
  - ensuring the provision for improving students' literacy and numeracy skills is at least consistently good across all subjects
  - ensuring all staff consistently follow the school's policies and procedures, particularly for managing behaviour, giving students feedback on their work and challenging all students to achieve their potential.
  
- Leaders and governors should take urgent and effective action to improve the safety and well-being of the students to:
  - improve students' behaviour, especially as they move around the school and at the start and end of the school day.
  - improve students' attendance and punctuality to school and at the off-site provision, through responding more rapidly and effectively to students' lateness and absence
  - make sure the school's personal, social and health curriculum enables students to be fully understanding of, and know how to avoid, potential risks to their personal safety and well-being.
  
- Improve the impact of the leadership, including governance, in raising the attainment and improving the progress of students by:
  - ensuring the pupil premium funding is spent effectively on supporting the disadvantaged students to achieve at least as well as students nationally and that the spending is monitored robustly
  - improving the impact of middle leaders, by holding them rigorously to account for students' progress and the quality of teaching students receive
  - ensuring the governing body fully understand how well students are performing so they can more rigorously challenge the school to improve
  - improving the skills and knowledge of governors, particularly in the monitoring of the school's finances as well as the quality of teaching, so that they can fulfil their statutory duties appropriately.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 June 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, head of school and other senior leaders, leaders of mathematics and the leader of personal, social and health education. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors and a representative of the local authority. In addition, discussions were held with groups of students. Inspectors also scrutinised the single central record, attendance and behaviour information and a recently completed audit of the school's financial position.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, four teachers have left the school. A restructure of teaching and support staff has been completed which has resulted in a number of redundancies. Some other teachers have found positions elsewhere and will leave the school soon. In total, 18 teachers and 17 members of the support staff will leave the school at the end of the summer term. A number of appointments have been made to fill vacant posts and some further posts are currently out to advert. The school continues to receive support from the Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Senior leaders are now confident that ongoing assessments across both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are accurate and tracking data is secure. Where assessment was less secure, departments have adapted their approach so that there is a stronger evidence base, including the use of more testing. All teachers now have useful data on each student's current level of attainment and increasingly use this information to plan lessons that meet students' needs. Senior leaders are also using the more reliable data effectively to monitor the progress of each year group and to challenge middle leaders to ensure additional support is in place for any student making slower progress.

Current data suggest 40% of students in Year 11 are on track to attain five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. Although this would represent a marked improvement on 2014, it remains well below the national average. The school's data also shows students now make better progress in both English and mathematics, although the proportion of students making expected or more than expected progress remains below the national average. Consequently, the school is likely to be below the government's current floor standard again in 2015. Better progress is also evident in some other subjects including humanities, information and communication technology, business studies and performing arts.

The school's data for the current Year 11 show the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students in the school is expected to be wider than last year, with only 31% of disadvantaged students on track to attain five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Narrowing this gap across other year groups remains a key area for senior leaders to tackle.

There are some signs that students have begun to make better progress in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3, although there are still significant proportions of students not on track to attain the targets the school has set for them. Analysis of progress data shows it is the lower and middle-attaining students that make slower progress, with the most able students generally making good progress. This analysis has helped senior leaders to recognise where provision is in need of improvement and steps have been taken to reorganise the management and deployment of teaching assistants so that their support can be targeted more effectively.

Currently there are 27 students who attend the school's off-site provision for part or all of the week, because they present more challenging behaviour. The centre provides a restricted curriculum focused on English and mathematics, the arts, physical education and science. In addition, students receive good support for their personal and social development, as many face considerable welfare issues. Although there are some individual successes, overall, these students make inadequate progress because their attendance is poor and some are regularly excluded. Senior leaders recognise they need to do more to develop the school's curriculum so that there are better vocational opportunities for these students, and some programmes are being developed with private providers to increase access to work-based learning. The centre is developing good links with local further education providers and almost all students that attend the offsite provision access appropriate courses after Year 11.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is inconsistent within subjects and across year groups. However, teaching is improving because more lessons are now planned to move learning forward rather than keep students busy. Lessons typically now have clear learning objectives, which teachers revisit during the lesson to check whether they have been achieved. More lessons are now pitched appropriately and provide more challenge. Teachers now consistently mark students' work in line with the school's policy. In some subjects, such as English and history, students say marking is particularly helpful, as they are given time in lessons to respond to the teachers' comments and improve their work.

In mathematics, schemes of work have been rewritten at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and good professional development of teachers is ensuring the quality of teaching in the subject is improving. Teachers meet and greet students at the start of lessons and learning gets off to a quick start. Some teachers provide good opportunities for

students to solve problems, although this approach is not yet consistent across the whole department.

Additional literacy and numeracy lessons designed to accelerate the progress of those students that enter the school with lower levels of attainment in English and mathematics have been ineffective. This is because the support staff that deliver these lessons have not been sufficiently trained or skilled to address the gaps in students' knowledge. In addition, those students that join the school with English as an additional language still do not receive sufficiently specialised teaching for them to rapidly acquire literacy skills. Senior leaders have recognised this and from the end of June, when the school begins teaching next year's timetable, different arrangements will come into place. The literacy and numeracy catch-up programme will be planned and delivered by English and mathematics teachers and more training will be provided to support those teachers working most closely with students that have English as an additional language.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Senior leaders held their nerve when the number of students being excluded for poor behaviour reached an unacceptable peak last January. Since then, the numbers being excluded have fallen steadily, as students increasingly understand they must abide by the school's rules on behaviour. There remain a number of students that continue to exhibit challenging behaviour however, and the overall level of exclusions is still a concern. Most members of staff apply the school's behaviour policy and, on the whole, students are calm and sensible in lessons and around the school site. There are still occasions when lessons are disrupted, and some students feel some teachers do not always deal with disruptive behaviour quickly enough.

Students' attitudes to learning are improving, but remain inconsistent. When the teaching gives students opportunities to learn actively, to take part in discussions or to work in groups, the students engage well and participate fully. In a mathematics lesson for example, students made outstanding progress when they worked together to solve challenging probability problems. However, where the teaching is less active, some students lose interest and drift off-task.

Students' attendance continues to be a major concern, as overall attendance since the last monitoring inspection has not improved, and attendance for the year to date remains below 90%. During this monitoring inspection, most lessons observed by inspectors had three or four students absent. This is partly because there continues to be a significant number of students on the school roll that only attend occasionally and despite the efforts of attendance leaders, stubbornly remain regularly absent. Because of this, school leaders have focused on improving the attendance of those that attend more regularly, but still, on average, miss around a day a fortnight. This strategy has had some success, particularly in Year 10 where the focused efforts of the head of year have brought noticeable improvements.

Senior leaders and the local authority are exploring ways to increase the resources available to improve attendance so that they can be targeted more effectively on the particular communities where absence rates are greatest. Heads of each year group also need to be more consistent in their approach to promoting good attendance.

Students say they feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe. Nevertheless, leaders have recognised the need to provide a more suitable curriculum to address the particular needs of the community in which many students report serious welfare issues. Detailed plans are now in place for this curriculum to be delivered across Key Stage 3 and 4 from the end of June.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Since the last monitoring visit, the governing body has taken greater financial control of the school budget, including establishing a five year deficit reduction plan. They have conducted a review of the school's staffing and completed a re-structure that has led to a number of redundancies of teaching and support staff. In addition, they have ensured additional government funding for disadvantaged students is now being used appropriately and that strategies to raise their achievement are being coordinated effectively. They have also taken steps to ensure further additional funding for those students that enter the school below the expected standard in English or mathematics is used effectively. Governors now receive very good information from the head of school and make more regular visits to see the school's work for themselves. Consequently, they are now knowledgeable about current levels of achievement across the school and about the quality of teaching. They know what is progressing well and what is not and challenge senior leaders robustly. Governors have ensured the school website now meets statutory requirements.

Senior leaders have not, however, had a significant impact on some key aspects of the school. In particular, attendance levels continue to be a major cause of concern and a limiting factor in the school's efforts to raise students' achievement. The number of students being excluded from the school either permanently or for fixed periods remains high and a suitable curriculum for less academic students needs further development. Levels of progress in a wide number of subjects, including English and mathematics remain below that seen nationally and current predictions suggest the school will be below the government's current floor standard for attainment and progress again this year. The quality of middle leadership has remained variable and some middle leaders have chosen to move on from the school. However, better staffing, including at middle leadership level, is now in place and plans to bring about improvement are more advanced. Importantly, the quality of teaching is improving and there is a more positive climate for learning around the school.

Leaders know where teaching is good enough and where it is not. They are providing effective support to address weaker teaching, for example in science and



in mathematics. In these departments, the quality of training and professional development has been more intensive and has had a positive impact. More widely, the quality of teaching continues to improve and there are some examples of strong practice where students make rapid gains in learning.

The school's strategy to raise the attainment of disadvantaged students is now more developed. The progress disadvantaged students make is now scrutinised effectively and teachers are being held more accountable for the progress of the disadvantaged students they teach. Greater consideration is being given to the deployment of teachers. The use of teaching assistants has been reviewed and in the future they will work more closely with disadvantaged students during lessons. In addition, the school has advertised to recruit four attainment tutors who will provide support and mentoring for disadvantaged students. Although the impact of these new strategies is yet to be seen, current tracking data does show some signs that efforts to narrow gaps are beginning to have an impact in some year groups

### **External support**

External support for the school continues to be through the Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust. Increasingly members of staff at the school benefit from working with colleagues from academies within the Trust. Newly-qualified teachers, for example, have benefited from working with colleagues across the Trust to research aspects of teaching and the new curriculum for personal, social and health education has been developed in conjunction with colleagues across the Trust.

The local authority continues to check on the impact of the support from the Trust. In addition, regular meetings are held to monitor key performance indicators and to challenge senior leaders where concerns remain. In particular, the local authority continues to challenge the school to improve attendance and reduce the number of students that are excluded for poor behaviour.

An audit of the school's budget has been completed by the local authority and tighter financial checks are now in place. The school has prepared a deficit recovery plan that has been approved by the governing body and presented to the Interim Director of Children's Services for final approval.