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Mr David Hudson  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Hudson

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

Following my visit with Judith Gooding and Melanie Williams, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 2 and 3 December 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 fourth 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 taking effective action 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 for Education, 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, head of school and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Further meetings were held with faculty leaders, a group of teachers, staff responsible for the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme and groups of pupils. Inspectors undertook observations in 27 part-lessons, a number of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited the sanctions room which is used to isolate poorly behaved pupils. In addition, inspectors observed the general climate around the school at social times. Inspectors took account of achievement information, behaviour and attendance records, checks on the quality of teaching, and safeguarding information.

### **Context**

At the end of the summer term, 38 members of staff left the school, 16 of whom were teachers. In September, 10 teachers joined the school, most of whom are newly qualified. There are also a number of new trainee teachers. Some middle leaders are new to the school, including the faculty leaders of English and science. Some other middle leaders have been promoted internally, including the faculty leader of mathematics. Since the previous monitoring inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen further. There are currently 882 pupils on roll. The school continues to be supported by the Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust.

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

Last year, work done in all subject areas to improve the accuracy and reliability of assessments proved effective. As a result, leaders were able to track and predict pupils' progress and attainment accurately. As anticipated, 42% of pupils attained five or more GCSE A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics. This represented a 16% improvement on the previous year. However, this overall rise in attainment masks the significantly different levels of success between subjects. In particular, English results were better than those in mathematics.

Provisional examination results for English show that the proportion of pupils that made expected progress, from their different starting points, was significantly above the national average. As a result of this strong progress, 60% of pupils attained a GCSE A\* to C grade in the subject. This reflected the better teaching and positive climate for learning that have been established in the English department. In contrast, the proportion of pupils that made expected progress in mathematics was significantly below the national average. In this subject, only 44% of pupils attained a GCSE A\* to C grade. This reflected the weaker teaching in mathematics, over time,

that did not prepare enough students with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to be successful in examinations. A key challenge for the school, therefore, is to improve achievement in mathematics and narrow the difference in performance between the two subjects across this year.

Over half of the pupils who sat examinations last year were from disadvantaged backgrounds. Overall, the attainment of this group improved markedly on the previous year, indicating that targeted efforts to support this group are having a positive impact. In particular, disadvantaged pupils made good progress in English, science and modern foreign languages. The impact of the additional support provided for disadvantaged pupils is still inconsistent, however, and in other subjects, particularly mathematics, disadvantaged pupils made inadequate progress. Because of these inconsistencies, the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school did not narrow.

Examination results in a number of other subjects, including science, business studies, engineering, information technology and Spanish also showed improvement on the previous year. Standards in these subjects now compare well with standards nationally. However, there remains some inconsistency, particularly in subjects where turbulence in staffing prevented pupils from reaching their potential.

Leaders have set more ambitious targets for the current Year 11. The school's most recent assessments indicate that just over half of pupils are on track to attain five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics in 2016. These assessments also show that the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school has begun to narrow. The school's most recent assessments indicate that pupils in Key Stage 3 are making better progress. However, leaders are very aware that a high proportion of pupils enter the school with poorly developed reading, writing and number skills. They have further refined the support they provide to help all pupils develop their reading. However, there are insufficient opportunities across the whole curriculum for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills.

### **The quality of teaching**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, leaders have taken decisive action to address the weaker teaching. As a result, there has been considerable turbulence in staffing. From September, a relatively high number of new teachers joined the school, many of which are inexperienced trainee or newly qualified teachers. Senior leaders have ensured that the new teachers have received good induction and appropriate training. However, some less experienced teachers are taking time to establish themselves. Some are struggling to exert their authority and manage behaviour firmly enough. For example, they allow pupils to shout out and disrupt the learning of their more diligent peers. In addition, some teachers do not do enough to address poor presentation and too many books are unacceptably untidy. Senior

leaders are checking carefully on the progress of new teachers and are providing specific support where it is required. They recognise that more still needs to be done and, from January, a senior leader from the Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust will work in the school on a full-time basis to support teachers' professional development.

During this inspection, inspectors also observed examples of effective teaching. Typically, the quality of planning across the school has improved so that more lessons build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers increasingly ask probing questions to assess pupils' understanding. In the most effective lessons, the learning progresses with pace and pupils have planned opportunities throughout to discuss their learning with one another. However, the quality of learning is better in Key Stage 4 than it is in Key Stage 3. This is because older pupils are more aspirational and motivated. They concentrate better and adopt a more studious approach. In contrast, some younger pupils, particularly some in lower sets, are yet to develop appropriate learning behaviours. Some struggle to concentrate and are less able to work with, or listen to, their classmates.

During this inspection, inspectors focused particularly on the quality of teaching in mathematics. The new subject leader is providing good support for new members of staff. The quality of lesson-planning and marking is improving. Pupils regularly receive useful written comments and further activities to develop their understanding. Teachers use effective questioning throughout lessons to check on pupils' level of understanding. Teaching assistants consistently provide good support. However, in some lessons, the work set does not challenge pupils sufficiently. There are still too few opportunities for pupils to grapple with sufficiently challenging problems. As a result, some pupils are not equipped with the necessary strategies to tackle new and unfamiliar mathematics.

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

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve and the atmosphere in most lessons and around the school site is calmer and more orderly. Lessons usually start promptly and only occasionally are pupils late for the start of lessons. More pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons and display positive attitudes to learning. However, there remain groups of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, who continue to present challenging behaviour. More experienced members of staff manage these pupils well, but a number of less experienced teachers are struggling to exert their authority sufficiently. Leaders are aware of this, and are providing further training and support where it is required.

Last year, the number of pupils excluded for poor behaviour was very high as leaders introduced rigid policies to clamp down on the widespread and unacceptable behaviour that permeated the school. There continued to be a relatively high number of pupils who were repeatedly excluded, particularly amongst pupils who attended the school's off-site provision. Towards the end of last year, the school began to see improvements in behaviour in response to these policies as pupils increasingly accepted the school's higher expectations. In response, the use of exclusion started to reduce. At the off-site provision, a more suitable curriculum is having a positive impact as pupils find the learning more interesting and engaging. So far this year, the number of exclusions has reduced sharply. This is testament to the tough stance taken by leaders and the work they have done to improve the suitability of the curriculum. The number of pupils referred during the day to the sanctions room is also declining. However, leaders are not content with current levels and are looking to reduce referrals further.

Despite the school's considerable efforts, there has only been a modest improvement in attendance. The overall attendance for last year was slightly above 90%. Whilst this was an improvement, the levels of absence are still around twice that of pupils nationally, significantly compromising the school's efforts to improve levels of achievement. Disappointingly, the school has been unable to improve the attendance of the high proportion of pupils who miss school regularly. Leaders now have very good information on the attendance of different groups and have begun to use this information more effectively. For example, they have targeted the attendance of Roma pupils, which was a particular cause for concern. Leaders have made considerable efforts to engage parents within the Roma community. The school provides a minibus to help pupils from the community get to school. They have also introduced a new tutor-group system for Roma pupils in which older pupils act as good role models for younger pupils. Although at an early stage, the initial impact of these strategies has improved the attendance of Roma pupils by 8%.

The school now has in place a team of staff with the knowledge and skills to deliver a specialist curriculum to support pupils' personal, social, health and cultural development. The curriculum has been prepared effectively to address specific risks known to be prevalent within the community. As such, the curriculum is openly confronting the risks posed by child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, drugs, alcohol and arranged marriage. Pupils spoke positively to inspectors about the curriculum. Teachers effectively ensure pupils are regularly signposted to sources of specialist support. Already, the school has examples of pupils acting to protect themselves because they have been better informed.



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

Leaders have had a positive impact on a number of key areas since the previous monitoring inspection. They have established a better climate for learning, improved arrangements for keeping pupils safe, tackled some weaker teaching and improved standards of achievement. However, leaders know there is still much to do to ensure the school is removed from special measures when next inspected. In particular, they need to increase the progress of pupils currently in the school, particularly in mathematics, improve attendance, and secure more consistently good teaching. Leaders, including the governors, have an accurate picture of what needs to be done and appropriate plans in place.

A significant barrier to progress, however, is the school's ongoing financial difficulties. Although a plan to address the deficit budget was agreed with the local authority, further action now appears inevitable. The falling school roll has further aggravated an already challenging financial position and further restructuring of the staffing is likely to be required to ensure the school's viability. Leaders and governors will meet with the local authority again soon to review the budget position. Because of this, the school is not in a position to push forward with the governing body's plans to convert to sponsored academy status. This status would ensure the long-term ongoing support of the Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust, which has been an essential feature of the progress made by the school to date.

## **External support**

Support to the school continues to be almost exclusively from the Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust. The trust continues to demonstrate a high level of commitment and continues to provide generous levels of support. The executive headteacher continues to provide strong strategic leadership and uses the trust's resources generously to address identified weaknesses.

The local authority continues to offer limited support to the school. An adviser visits periodically to check on the school's progress. In addition, the local authority is working closely with the school and providing all the resources at its disposal to improve attendance.