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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 Nicholas Horn, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 March 2016, 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 fifth 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:

Leaders and managers are not 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, 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2016

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 representatives of the local authority. Further meetings were held with a group of teachers, staff responsible for the personal, social and health education programme and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed 17 part-lessons, and walked the school corridors during lessons to observe the general climate for learning. Inspectors also scrutinised a sample of pupils' English, mathematics and science books in detail. In addition, inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school at social times and spoke to pupils informally. Inspectors took account of achievement information, behaviour and attendance records, checks on the quality of teaching, records of the work of governors and safeguarding information.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, six teachers have left the school. A re-structure of teaching, support and administrative staff is currently underway. A temporary attendance and community officer has been appointed. There have been six temporary internal appointments made within English and mathematics with responsibility for improving teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9. Since the previous monitoring inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen further. There are currently 868 pupils on roll. The school continues to be supported by the Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered, where appropriate, alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the rate of improvement in the school has stalled. Leaders have been unable to secure consistently good teaching, improve attendance or eradicate disruptive behaviour. As a result, pupils' progress across the curriculum remains inconsistent and the most recent assessment information suggests levels of attainment are unlikely to show improvement on those seen in 2015. Although a number of other aspects of the school's work have continued to improve, these key indicators have not moved forwards.

Leaders are increasingly hampered by the impact of the school's significant deficit budget. The deficit has widened further, due to a reduction in income and a further fall in the number of pupils on the school roll. Although a further restructure of staffing is currently underway, which will lead to a number of redundancies, local authority colleagues are concerned that the scale of the school's deficit reduction

plans are not sufficiently radical to secure a balanced financial position. The ongoing financial situation remains a potential barrier to the planned conversion to sponsored academy status and is restricting leaders' ability to tackle key issues.

Members of the governing body have a good grasp of where the key challenges lie and have become increasingly challenging of leaders. They have developed their link roles and become increasingly well informed about specific aspects of the school's work. Their increasingly rigorous approach has, for example, scrutinised the work of the school's child protection team in detail and reached clear conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in mathematics. They continue to press leaders to reduce exclusions and improve levels of attendance. However, they recognise that key aspects of the school's work have become stubbornly hard to shift.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching has not improved since the previous monitoring visit. It remains inconsistent and some teachers continue to struggle to exert their authority, particularly when teaching lower ability sets. Regular checks on the quality of teaching by senior leaders have recognised that some teachers are struggling to manage behaviour and continue to require support. In some cases, leaders have reorganised the timetable so that more experienced colleagues have taken over classes where pupils were not making enough progress.

Inspectors observed some examples of strong teaching in English, modern foreign languages and religious education, where pupils made good progress. In these lessons, teachers held high expectations and ensured that the tasks provided for pupils were thought-provoking. Teachers typically used effective questioning to develop pupils' level of understanding and helped pupils to connect different and related ideas from previous lessons. Teachers broke lessons into a number of short episodes in order to sustain pupils' concentration, and had effective strategies, such as the use of humour, to defuse any potential misbehaviour.

Outcomes in mathematics have been significantly below the national average in the past. In the mathematics department, teachers have continued to work well as a team to improve aspects of their practice. They have improved the care and pride pupils take in their work. Scrutiny of books shows that most pupils now set out their work methodically and record each step of calculations. Teachers across the department now teach mathematical methods more consistently and ensure that mathematical rules and principles are highlighted clearly in books. The department has arranged good opportunities for less experienced colleagues to observe other members of the department. While these are positive developments, they have not yet been sufficient to ensure that enough pupils make the progress they should and some key challenges remain for the department. In particular, some teachers have continued to struggle with lower ability sets and some Key Stage 3 classes because of their more challenging behaviour. Some teachers still do not expect enough of pupils when planning lessons and are hampered by a lack of practical numeracy resources to help pupils who lack confidence in basic number skills.

Teachers are supportive of the training and professional development opportunities they receive. This training has had a positive impact on some aspects of teaching, such as the quality of presentation in pupils' books. However, it has not done enough to ensure that teachers hold high enough expectations. In addition, some teachers are not yet equipped with the necessary strategies to ensure that lessons engage and sustain the interest of pupils with lower levels of attainment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The behaviour of pupils in the school remains as it was at the time of the last monitoring inspection. On the whole, most pupils are calm and sensible in lessons and around the school site, but there remain a number of pupils that continue to exhibit challenging behaviour. A number of lessons continue to be disrupted by inappropriate behaviour and a small minority of pupils can be openly defiant of teachers' authority. Despite targeted training for less experienced teachers, inspectors saw a number of occasions when this was still the case, particularly in lower ability sets.

The level of exclusions from the school for bad behaviour has continued on a downward trend, but overall remains too high. The numbers of days lost due to exclusion fell in December, but rose sharply again in January following an altercation between a few pupils. Leaders and managers dealt swiftly with the incident and acted quickly to restore calm and reassure parents that it was an isolated event. However, a number of parents chose to keep their children off school the following week.

Leaders have continued to focus efforts on improving attendance levels. The school has temporarily employed another attendance officer who has already established good links with the community. Work to improve the attendance of pupils from the Roma community continues to have a positive impact. Their attendance now compares favourably with that of Roma pupils nationally, and is consistently better than it was last year. However, in order to achieve this improvement in attendance, leaders adopted a strategy of grouping Roma pupils into their own, culturally separate, mixed age tutor groups. Although this initiative has had some positive outcomes since its introduction last September, leaders accept it must be a temporary intervention, as it may, in time, conflict with the school's wider work to promote tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. Leaders will now set time limits for the initiative and adapt their approach to better meet individual pupils' needs, no matter what their cultural heritage.

Overall attendance has only improved very marginally this year and remains well below the national average for secondary schools. In particular, the proportion of pupils who continue to miss school regularly remains stubbornly high.

The school has good arrangements in place to support pupils' personal development and welfare. All members of staff are well trained in child protection and are skilled in recognising the signs of neglect or abuse. Safeguarding has a high priority in the school, reflecting the relatively high numbers of vulnerable pupils within the school community. Members of staff act quickly to protect pupils, whenever they have

concerns. School leaders are happy with the support provided by the local authority and the police who work increasingly effectively in partnership to protect children.

Pupils are increasingly well informed about how to avoid risks to their health and safety. They speak knowledgeably about a broad range of potential risks and know what steps to take if they have concerns. They trust members of staff to deal with their concerns promptly. Nevertheless, leaders have decided that more curriculum time in Key Stage 4 should be given over to pupils' personal, social, health and cultural development from September 2016.

Outcomes for pupils

The proportion of pupils currently in Year 11 who are on track to attain five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics has slipped since the last monitoring inspection in November 2015. The most recent assessment information now shows that the school expects 43% of pupils to attain this measure. The proportion of pupils in Year 11 who are making expected progress in English has remained securely above the national average, but has not improved rapidly enough in mathematics, and continues to be well below rates seen nationally. Pupils' progress across other subjects remains variable. Leaders can point to better progress in music and construction; but in subjects where many more pupils will take GCSE examinations this summer, the proportion of pupils making expected progress has declined. In science, for example, many pupils struggled when entered for core science examinations at the end of Year 10 and have not made good progress across Year 11.

In particular, the progress made by those pupils who entered the school with lower levels of attainment is poor. Not enough of these pupils in Year 11 are making the progress they should in English and mathematics. This is linked to weaker teaching and less authoritative management of behaviour in the lower sets.

Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than they did in the past, but improvements remain inconsistent across different subjects. For example, around two thirds of disadvantaged pupils are making expected progress in English but less than half are making expected progress in mathematics. Although teachers are targeting disadvantaged pupils with additional support, it is not yet having a consistently positive impact.

In Key Stage 3, the progress made by pupils is also variable across subjects. Scrutiny of the work in pupils' books shows that many pupils enjoy learning and take real pride in the presentation of their work. Most teachers hold high expectations of the most-able pupils and provide work that challenges them. However, the progress of lower attaining pupils is weaker and their books show that teachers expect too little and do not challenge poor presentation consistently enough. The progress of pupils currently in Year 7, in both English and mathematics, is well below expectations.

External support

The Wickersley Academy Trust has continued to provide generous ongoing support to the school and remains committed to becoming the school's academy sponsor. A number of seconded leaders continue to work in the school on a full-time basis and are having a positive impact on some aspects of the school's work. For example, safeguarding arrangements and provision for pupils' personal development and welfare have been strengthened.

The local authority continues to visit the school regularly to check on the progress being made. Recent visits have confirmed that the climate in the school is generally calm and settled and pupils in many classes apply themselves well. More widely, the local authority is keen to work with the school more closely on a number of initiatives and held a meeting with the executive headteacher recently to explore how partnership working can be strengthened.