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13 July 2022

Ms Pam Ridgwell  
Interim Headteacher  
Homewood College  
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East Sussex  
BN1 7LA

Dear Ms Pam Ridgwell

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Homewood College**

Following my visit to your school on 12 July 2022, 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 that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

**The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.**

**The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.**

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Brighton and Hove. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Maxine McDonald-Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 July 2022**

### **Context**

There have been a number of changes to staffing, including at senior leadership level, since the section 5 inspection in December 2021. The school is currently undergoing a staffing restructure to create new capacity within the leadership and pastoral teams. Currently, the leadership team consists of the interim headteacher, an assistant headteacher, an acting assistant headteacher and two key stage leaders. Since the section 5 inspection, the school has become disaggregated from the local authority's pupil referral unit and now has a separate governing body. A temporary interim inclusion leader was in post after the last inspection but has since left the school. A new, permanent inclusion leader role will begin in September. The school attendance and safeguarding officer has left the school and this role is being replaced with two pastoral officers and two pastoral higher level teaching assistants, who will focus on attendance and safeguarding. The school now has two members of staff who are trained to train others in positive behaviour management. Currently, five members of staff are absent long term. Discussions with an academy trust about sponsorship of the school are underway. COVID-19 resulted in staff absence which, in turn, led to the school being closed at certain points during the pandemic.

During this monitoring inspection, the inspector focused on the areas for improvement from the section 5 inspection which related to the safeguarding of pupils.

### **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

Since the section 5 inspection in December 2021, leaders have not hesitated in beginning to implement plans to improve the school. They are working hard to ensure the much-needed improvements happen as swiftly as possible. The staffing structure that is currently underway is designed to ensure that leaders have capacity to continue focusing on the improvements in the long term. Leaders have accurately identified the underlying issues and have made necessary systemic changes in all areas of the school. While it is too early to see the impact of some of this work, the improvements in safeguarding and behaviour are clear. The impact of COVID-19 on staff absence resulted in some delays to leaders' implementation of their improvement plans. In addition, the uncertainty around the school becoming an academy is unsettling for staff and pupils. However, staff are committed to improving the school for pupils and understand how quickly they must make the much-needed improvements.

Leaders have completely overhauled safeguarding systems and processes since the last inspection. Staff safeguarding knowledge is now strong because of helpful training days and regular discussions. Systems used to record concerns and monitor responses to these are now being used effectively by staff. Consequently, leaders have a much-improved oversight of pupils' wellbeing. All necessary recruitment checks are now in place and staff personnel files now contain all relevant documents. The single central record is not only compliant but is well-organised and clear.

Attendance is beginning to improve but is still poor. While the majority of pupils are now attending school at some point during the week, there are still some who are not attending at all. Approximately 25% of pupils are accessing full-time provision. Of pupils on part-time timetables, very few are accessing provision every day. Leaders have ambitious plans for most pupils on part-time timetables to be accessing full-time provision from September. Leaders are working closely with other professionals and families to try to make this happen.

At the last inspection, very few pupils were accessing education on site. Although this is beginning to improve, this still remains the case for a large proportion of the week for many pupils. What has improved significantly is leaders' awareness of where pupils are when they are not on site. The school's 'sight and sound' tracker allows staff to record the whereabouts of pupils daily, after they have spoken with them on the phone. The majority of pupils are now seen or heard from every day and, where this is not the case, leaders are communicating closely with other professionals as part of a multi-agency approach to ensuring that pupils are safe. Pupils not attending school full time on site, now have an improved offer of provision which includes a variety of alternative provision and online learning. There is daily communication between alternative provision and school to ensure that pupils attend and are safe. 'The Hive', an on-site nurturing environment, is enabling staff to work successfully with some of the pupils with the most complex social, emotional and mental health needs, re-engaging them in their learning. Many of these pupils had previously not attended school for lengthy periods of time.

Despite these improvements since the last inspection, attendance remains poor. Although there is beginning to be an improvement, concerns remain, as leaders cannot be sure of pupil safety and whereabouts in between daily calls.

Teachers are not always accurately recording pupils' attendance. As well as affecting effective oversight of pupils' whereabouts, this also means that pupils could be at risk of harm in the case of an emergency. This was noticed during the inspection and indicates that leaders' oversight of how well some new strategies are embedding is not yet effective.

Staff have been fully involved in creating the new behaviour policy and are now beginning to confidently apply it. This is having a positive impact on improving behaviour in lessons and around the school. Disruptive and, at times, unsafe behaviour still occurs. However, on the whole, pupils now understand what is expected of them. Positive behaviour strategies, such as reward trips, are starting to work particularly well. Leaders have begun analysing patterns of behaviour and possible reasons. This is successfully leading to preventative strategies beginning to be put in place for pupils who are struggling to manage their own behaviour well. There has been a decrease in serious incidents of unsafe behaviour and a large decrease in exclusions. Pupils and staff report feeling much safer in school. During the inspection, the school was a calm environment with pupils engaged in what was happening in their classrooms. Pupils were friendly and happy to say hello and interact with the inspector. Staff are continuing to gain confidence in helping

pupils to manage their own behaviour successfully. Professional relationships between staff and pupils, already positive, are strengthening further.

The school site is now as secure as possible within restraints of funding. Compliance and health and safety has vastly improved. The school building still needs a lot of work but staff and pupils are making the most of the environment they have, taking pride in painting areas to improve them.

Governors have a strong understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. Experienced governors are using their expertise to support and challenge school leaders well in driving improvements.

### **Additional support**

School leaders are working closely with the local authority partners for school improvement on a comprehensive package of support. As a result of the serious safeguarding issues identified in the last inspection, leaders received focused support which included a detailed safeguarding audit. Various local authority teams have supported leaders in different ways, all of which has been helpful.

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector met with staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, two representatives of the local authority and spoke with the local authority designated officer on the phone. The inspector also spent time around the school, along with the headteacher, observing what was happening and speaking with pupils and staff. Two free-text comments to Ofsted Parent View were considered.