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Miss Pam Ridgwell
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Dear Pam Ridgwell

Special measures monitoring inspection of Homewood College

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 8 February 2023 on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in December 2021.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, a range of staff, the co-chairs of the governing body and representatives from the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited tutor time, a selection of lessons and scrutinised school records and documentation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Homewood College remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

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

The school should take further action to:

- Develop a comprehensive approach to teaching pupils to read so that gaps in reading knowledge are made up quickly and securely and their fluency and confidence when reading are improved.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

There have been further changes to staffing since the first monitoring inspection. There are still five members of staff on long-term absence. The planned staffing restructure detailed in the first monitoring inspection did not happen due to funding constraints. Consequently, the plans for improvement have not been fully implemented, and leaders have not moved on as quickly as planned with curriculum developments. Additionally, the school had to close on several days in the autumn term due to staff absence from COVID-19. These factors have hindered the progress of the school towards the removal of special measures. While a sponsor multi-academy trust (MAT) has been identified, there is uncertainty regarding the timescale by which the school will join the MAT. Staff are unsettled by this situation, which adds to staffing and recruitment challenges for leaders.

Leaders have established a wide curriculum that is matched to the needs of pupils. They have created three 'pathways' so that pupils can achieve qualifications relevant to their interests and aspirations post-16. Leaders are determined that pupils should have a bespoke offer, and therefore a range of academic and vocational qualifications are available. Pupils receive regular advice as they progress through these pathways, including from an independent careers adviser.

Staff have been involved in designing the various courses for pupils. They are enthusiastic about the opportunities they can offer. Pupils like the variety of opportunities and the equality they have with peers at mainstream schools. However, some of the curriculum thinking is still being established. Currently, there is a focus on the activities pupils will do rather than the order in which they need to attain knowledge. Any gaps in prior learning are spotted because teachers know pupils well rather than because the designed curriculum helps staff to identify what pupils need to learn.

One weakness of the curriculum is the lack of a systematic approach to supporting pupils who find reading difficult. Leaders know that poor reading knowledge and confidence prevents pupils from accessing the wider curriculum successfully. This work is now planned to start in March, nearly six months after leaders originally intended. Leaders recognise that this needs to be a whole-school priority and addressed with urgency.

More successfully, leaders have ensured that a focus on pupils' personal development runs through the whole school, starting with 'T-Time'. This is time where tutor groups meet in the morning for tea, toast and to talk about current affairs, big moral questions, or tricky personal challenges. Pupils are starting to engage well with this, and I saw pupils discuss recent world events in one class, while in another they were discussing how to make the best toast and listening well to each other's ideas. The implementation and

longer-term impact of this curriculum, along with support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, will be a focus of the next monitoring visit.

Leaders have maintained their focus on creating a culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are confident when discussing safeguarding issues and actions. The effective use of systems to record and oversee have been sustained. The single central record remains compliant, well organised and clear. Staff work well together to use the agreed approaches to support pupils' behaviour. As with the previous monitoring inspection, the school is a calm environment. However, it should be noted that most pupils were not in school because they were being educated off site or were absent.

Pupils' attendance remains poor. Leaders' actions continue to make a difference, and most pupils' attendance has improved since the monitoring inspection. Many pupils access off-site education at an alternative provider for specialist courses such as hair and beauty. Leaders have a good oversight of these pupils, visiting them and making sure that they are learning well. There are still too many pupils who refuse to attend any provision. For these pupils, leaders follow clear routines, their 'sight or sound' process, where they check up on them by telephone and/or visit them so that they know where they are.

School leaders have continued to make good use of the local authority support for the school. The local authority has provided advisers and essential premises improvements such as fencing. More recently, the local authority has identified two experienced governors to join the local governing body, a development that current governors welcome. School leaders also appreciate the advice from local authority specialists, such as the educational psychologist and the attendance and special educational needs and/or disabilities teams.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
His Majesty's Inspector