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Miss Pam Ridgwell
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Dear Miss 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 4 July 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 third 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, governors including the co-chairs of the governing body, and advisors 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 all the classes in the school, spoke to pupils, looked at their work 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 insufficient progress to improve the school.**

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

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that all staff have high aspirations and expectations for the learning and achievement of all pupils across the curriculum.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders have continued to face challenges that have hampered their efforts to improve the school. Two multi-academy trusts have considered and declined to become the sponsors of the school. The work associated with these conversations has taken leaders' time and energy. Currently, there is disappointment and some confusion among leaders and governors about what happens next. They are determined to further improve the school but are uncertain as to what they are able to do with the academy order in place but no clear progress with this. The local authority is supporting them at this time. Alongside this uncertainty, there have been budgetary constraints which have also taken leaders' attention. Staffing remains a challenge with some staff still on long-term absence and many temporary staff.

In this inspection, I focused on the specific elements of the curriculum that were identified as priorities in my last monitoring inspection, namely improving pupils' reading and promoting their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Soon after the last inspection, the local authority provided an expert in early reading to support school leaders to address this aspect of school improvement. Together, they mapped out an approach that leaders quickly took forward. Staff now know which pupils need help with their reading. However, they do not know exactly who needs help to learn their phonic code and who needs more support with fluency and confidence. Various programmes have been started for different groups of pupils. The early signs of some of these are promising and leaders report that the small group of pupils receiving the most intense intervention are growing in confidence with all their learning across the curriculum. This is heartening. Leaders recognise that other pupils are likely to benefit from this work and so intend to ramp up this approach and train more staff to enable them to include more pupils. They recognise the need for greater urgency with this.

Other than with this specialist provision for a few pupils, the approach to improving pupils' reading has been diluted by a more general focus on literacy. Staff have completed displays which have helped to promote reading across the school. However, the impact of this is limited. Some staff do not yet follow the agreed school approaches and too readily read worksheets to pupils rather than help them to read for themselves. There are agreed ways of improving writing, but these are unlikely to be successful if pupils cannot read with confidence and fluency.

At the last inspection, leaders' focus on personal development was a relative strength of the school. The relationships between staff and pupils remain positive overall. Classrooms are mostly calm and pupils recognise that staff want to support them. However, the provision for pupils' SMSC development lacks focus. Staff follow shared books and schemes of work but are not deliberate about what pupils need to focus on. Some staff are skilled at pulling out learning from events or objects but too much of this is opportunistic. Not all pupils, particularly those learning off-site or on part-time timetables, receive the breadth of learning they should.

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils and have set these out clearly for all staff. These aspirations are not consistently realised in the classroom. Some work given to pupils will fill their time but will not support their progress through the planned curriculum. Too much time is given to cajoling pupils to sit quietly through playing games, drawing or listening to music instead of doing the planned learning activities. Some staff are too quick to do the work for pupils rather than help them understand how to do it themselves. Leaders know this and recognise that more staff development is required to ensure that all understand and implement the curriculum as planned.

More pupils are attending school or their off-site provision. This improvement is due to the systematic support from a wide range of staff. However, attendance overall remains poor. Many pupils do not yet have a full-time curriculum offer. For some, a temporary part-time timetable is a very successful way of helping them to re-engage with school. This minority of pupils return to school and attend well. However, leaders are still working with a group who are reluctant to engage with school. Leaders ensure that they are safe, using their 'sight or sound' process where they check up on them by telephone and/or visit them. Leaders also ensure that routine visits are made to alternative provisions so that they can work together to check on learning and pupils' well-being.

Leaders have continued to ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All required checks are completed. Leaders take appropriate action when concerns are raised by staff, pupils or external agencies. They take this aspect of their work very seriously.

Leaders and governors have continued to work well with the support offered by the local authority. The termly 'school improvement board' and 'team around the school' meetings are well attended, and specialists offer support to the school. However, the contextual factors have challenged at all levels, including here. The reading consultant and school improvement partner provided by the local authority have visited the school regularly and know that more needs to be done. They share the determination of school leaders and governors to increase the quality of provision and recognise that a greater sense of urgency is required.

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