

2 November 2007

Mr A Larkin  
Headteacher  
Cloughwood School  
Stones Manor Lane  
Hartford  
Northwich  
Cheshire  
CW8 1NU

Dear Mr Larkin

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CLOUGHWOOD SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 1 November, 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December, 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, the chair of governors and the Director for Children's Services for Cheshire.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF CLOUGHWOOD SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 1 November 2007

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work in each year group, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the leadership team, groups of teachers and support staff, and a representative of the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the first monitoring visit in May 2007, a number of teachers and support staff have left the school. Departments that were accommodated at a distance from the main teaching area, such as Student Services, have been relocated closer to the classrooms. There has been a broadening in the range of abilities of pupils admitted to the school. There are now more pupils of high intelligence, including some within the autistic spectrum, than at the time of the first monitoring visit. All pupils have been excluded from their mainstream schools because of their emotional and behavioural difficulties.

### Achievement and standards

Standards remain low. Standards of pupils' spoken responses are frequently of a higher level than their written work. The 2007 tests and examinations at Years 6, 9 and 11 indicate that standards are beginning to rise - in English and science at Year 9, for example - but there was no substantial improvement. However, far more pupils were entered for GCSE at Year 11 than in the previous year, 12 in 2007 compared to 4 in 2006. The school is therefore more inclusive and the grades obtained by the larger number of Year 11 pupils were broadly similar to those obtained by a more select group in 2006.

Within lessons, pupils' achievement was never less than satisfactory, despite the barriers to learning associated with the pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties. In each lesson within the secondary department, there were interruptions to learning caused by inappropriate behaviour, which inevitably slowed pupils' progress. However, because of the teachers' good management of behaviour, the unwillingness of other pupils to become involved, and the increasing ability of pupils to recover their composure compared to that at the time of the last monitoring visit, effective learning always took place.

Standards of English are improving. Pupils enjoy their lessons in religious education and are making satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other world faiths and in discussing the fundamental issues raised by religious beliefs. Standards in mathematics are not improving. However, there has been considerable disruption to staffing within the mathematics department.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006:

- Improve achievement and standards in English, mathematics and religious education for students throughout the secondary department by ensuring good quality of teaching and learning in these subjects— good.

### Personal development and well-being

The significant improvement in the personal development of pupils reported in the first monitoring letter has been sustained. Pupils are more settled in lessons and around the school, and the ethos of the school is more relaxed. For example, during an assembly on Remembrance, all pupils respected a request to reflect on what had been said and listened in complete silence to a recording of *The Last Post*. The level of attendance has increased by 6% over that at the time of the first monitoring visit. It is now 91%, close to the national average for all secondary schools. There have been no exclusions.

Many pupils continue to have difficulty behaving appropriately in lessons. In most lessons, although the incidence is much reduced nowadays, teachers devote time to correcting and managing individual pupils' inappropriate behaviour, such as when they swear or make discriminatory remarks. However, pupils demonstrate an increasing ability to evaluate their behaviour and its impact on themselves and others. This is largely because of the way the school has involved them in writing a progressively more demanding set of attitudes and behaviours within which pupils can place themselves and through which they can plan to make improvements. Pupils set themselves behaviour targets in each lesson and staff feedback frankly at the end of the lesson. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons is increasing. In most lessons there is humour and good-natured repartee between pupils and teachers. Lessons are calmer and more focused on learning. If one pupil is unable to cope, others rarely make a difficult situation worse, enabling teachers to resolve the situation quickly and move on. Pupils' basic skills are improving, particularly their English, and this is contributing positively to preparation for their future economic well-being. All pupils leaving the school in 2007 went on to college or work-based learning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006:

- Analyse the patterns of poor attendance and take decisive action to improve it— good.

### Quality of provision

The school has responded particularly well to the priorities identified during the first monitoring visit. The teachers and teaching assistants, working closely with staff from the LA, have been engaged in a root-and-branch evaluation of teaching and learning at the school, to improve their effectiveness. The quality of teaching is now generally good. The impact of the changes is already evident in pupils' achievement and enjoyment of lessons. The most impressive improvement in teaching is seen in the involvement of teaching assistants within lessons. Assistants now play a full part, teaching alongside the subject teacher, taking groups and occasionally, leading the lesson. There is excellent teamwork. One-to-one support for pupils, by comparison,

appears far less effective than the involvement of teaching assistants in teaching the lesson. Teachers are actively exploring new teaching strategies aimed at providing more exciting work for pupils, and involving them more in their learning. Teachers of all subjects now consider themselves as teachers of English. They consolidate literacy skills in their lessons and are contributing to the pupils' acquisition of the basic skills they will need for the future. The management of behaviour is consistently good. There is some way to go towards teachers tracking the progress of individual pupils, but this process is developing steadily with the linking of performance data supplied by the LA to the individual education and behaviour plans for each pupil. As teachers and teaching assistants see the successful impact of their work on the pupils, their confidence is growing. Morale is high.

The care, guidance and support for pupils continue to be good aspects of the school's work. Since the first monitoring visit, all staff have received up-dated training on safeguarding pupils. The work of Students' Services to promote and ensure pupils' emotional well-being has developed well, focused on helping pupils to recognise and contribute to solving their own problems. Its work is attracting recognition outside of the school. The school works well with outside agencies. Lessons in religious education and in personal, social, health and citizenship education make a significant contribution to pupils' growing self-esteem, confidence and preparation for the future. Assemblies and meetings of the school also make important contributions to pupils' self-awareness and enjoyment of school, because their ethos is upbeat and positive.

The school continues to work very productively with the Connexions service, ensuring that pupils receive continuing support into work and further education through vocational links. In addition, the school has raised its expectations of what pupils can achieve in academic terms. It believes its expectations, focused up to now on the lower grades in GCSEs, should be revised upwards as improvements in the curriculum and in teaching quality make an impact on pupils. Targets for the current Year 10 pupils now include a number of pupils to achieve five good grades at GCSE.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006:

- Develop and implement a whole-school system for tracking students' progress and monitor its use to raise students' achievement – satisfactory.
- Ensure that opportunities are provided through the curriculum to promote pupils' spiritual development, raise their awareness of cultural diversity and promote their emotional well-being – good.
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met in the provision for citizenship and religious education – good.
- Develop and implement a robust and coherent vocational curriculum linked to relevant opportunities for students' work to be accredited – good.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher is providing outstanding leadership for the school. The vision and sense of direction reported in the first monitoring visit, including the clarity of the

commitment to the pupils, have been maintained and developed. Crucial decisions, such as the reallocation of teaching assistants to support the teaching of subjects and the delegation of significant responsibility to the senior staff, have paid off handsomely. Under the direction of the headteacher, supported by the LA, senior staff have successfully led and managed each key issue identified by inspectors, including the recent issues from the first monitoring visit in May. The school now has management strength in depth. It has the confidence of the LA and governors and is well placed to continue its improvement. The staff are unified and happier than at any time in the recent past. They are highly motivated and are engaging in an extensive programme of continuing professional development. They are confident that they can provide well for their vulnerable and challenging pupils. The school has a good ethos and everything is in place for standards to rise.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006:

- Conduct an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and involve all of the senior team and governors in whole-school planning to raise achievement – good.
- Improve communications and ensure that systems are established to share good practice throughout the school – good.

#### External support

The LA has provided a good level of challenge and support for the school to date and has worked effectively with governors and the headteacher. Progress has been monitored well. In particular, the LA committed a considerable level of manpower in September this year to conduct a thorough review of the working of the school. This provided the school with valuable feedback on its effectiveness.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics.
- Give time to considering the needs of the pupils now entering the school with emotional and behavioural difficulties and who are also highly intelligent. In collaboration with the LA, develop and implement an approach to teaching and learning that enables them to achieve their academic potential and improve their social development.