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24 June 2009

Ms Anne Quaile  
Headteacher  
Handsworth Grange Community Sports College  
Handsworth Grange Road  
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South Yorkshire  
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Dear Ms Quaile

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Handsworth Grange  
Community Sports College

Following my visit with Julie Price Grimshaw, Stephen Rowland and Christopher Griffin, additional inspectors, to your school on 22 and 23 June 2009, 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 September 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## Special measures: monitoring inspection of Handsworth Grange Community Sports College

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 June 2009

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other nominated staff, a groups of pupils, a group of governors including the chair of the IEB who is also the chair of the shadow governing body, the headteacher of the partner school who is also a National Leader of Education (NLE), a representative from the local authority and the school improvement partner.

### Context

Since the last visit, the amount of staff absence has reduced significantly. Following a number of appointments, the school will be fully staffed from September 2009. A shadow governing body has been established which has met twice. The NLE has reduced the time he spends in school and meetings with the headteacher are tailored to need. During this visit, Year 11 pupils were on study leave. Year 10 pupils were on work experience, although they attended school part-time to sit external examination modules. In addition, a small group of Year 8 pupils were out of school on an educational visit.

### Achievement and standards

As reported at the time of the last visit, more pupils in Year 11 are on track to meet their targets in external examinations as a result of intensive and well targeted support. Specialist subjects' targets, including information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education, are likely to be exceeded. However, although their progress has accelerated over the last year, past underperformance means that a significant proportion of Year 11 pupils will not attain the standards expected relative to their starting points in Year 7. Progress in other years remains variable. While there is evidence of better progress in Year 10, pupils' achievement in Years 8 and 9 is more variable between subjects, reflecting past underachievement and some weaker teaching that persists in the school.

School leaders have taken a number of positive steps to narrow the gap in performance between different groups of pupils. For example, heads of Year 7 have piloted a project to combine data about pupils' academic progress and personal development and produced a detailed profile of their whole-school performance. Information is used systematically by form tutors and other staff to identify what actions are required to overcome any barriers to learning. Consequently, more pupils in this year group are on track to meet end-of-year targets.

Robust systems to track pupils' progress have sharpened the focus on raising standards across the school and placed teachers in a stronger position to adapt their planning to meet the needs of different teaching groups. Consequently, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and, where teaching is good, their progress is beginning to accelerate.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement – satisfactory

#### Personal development and well-being

Pupils generally behave appropriately in lessons and around the school; those who spoke with inspectors reported that behaviour has improved since the last visit. However, low-level disruption is evident in a small number of lessons and during the inspection inspectors witnessed a small amount of loud and boisterous behaviour on corridors that were unsupervised. Although there are some inconsistencies, agreed procedures for managing behaviour are generally applied effectively.

Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average. This is due to the effective strategies the school has in place, such as the use of text messages to inform parents whenever a child has not registered in school. The number of persistent absentees has been reduced since the time of the last monitoring visit. Punctuality to school and to lessons has improved but there are still occasions when students arrive late to class without a valid reason or are not challenged by teachers about their late arrival.

#### Quality of provision

The school has continued to make progress in improving the quality of teaching. There has been an increase in the proportion of lessons that are good or better and a decrease in the proportion that are inadequate.

A key factor in these gains has been the effective and highly rigorous systems the school has developed to bring about improvement. These include a comprehensive sequence of lesson observations in which strengths and weaknesses are identified with equal candour. A significant strength of observation records is the emphasis placed on the quality of the pupils' learning, and effective strategies are in place to support colleagues requiring further development of their teaching methods. These include the well focused use of learning coaches within the school and the deployment of lead professionals from the local authority. Consequently, there is evidence of an emerging consistency in important elements of classroom practice.

Lesson planning is more secure. The school's template for lesson planning is well embedded and promotes the teachers' focus on ensuring that each lesson is aiming to reach clear learning outcomes. This provides lessons with a greater sense of

purpose and progress towards a fixed goal. The pace of learning has also improved. In the very best lessons careful management of time ensures that not too long is spent on tasks so the lesson retains a sense of freshness and enjoyment. Good, fast-paced questioning sustains the pupils' interest and checks how well they understand what they are learning. The use of interactive handsets, for example, to test pupils' recall of key facts adds a real sense of enthusiasm to learning. Inspectors noted other improvements in the quality of the learning environment as seen in displays on walls and corridors. The best of these combine celebrating the pupils' work with providing good examples to help all achieve higher outcomes.

Despite the positive gains, inconsistencies in provision remain. While planning does try to take notice of different levels of ability in a class the ensuing lessons do not always reflect these differences in practice. In particular, the consistency of challenge for higher attaining pupils is not yet assured. On occasion, teachers rush through modelled examples of intended activities and in some lessons teachers do not make enough use of questions to check that the pupils understand what they are learning. This causes confusion for some pupils and progress slows as a result. In the least effective lessons, activities do not engage all pupils and the resulting deterioration in their behaviour and attitude to learning is not always managed effectively.

Systems to assess and track the progress made by pupils have been refined since the last visit. School leaders are confident in the reliability of assessments in most subject areas and information is gathered regularly to establish whether pupils are on track to meet challenging targets. Assessment information is presented in an easy-to-use format that enables all staff to identify where gaps in learning exist across all years so that strategies can be targeted to accelerate their progress. Teachers have a better understanding of what pupils can achieve and are raising their expectations accordingly. There are now more consistently explicit references during lessons to what pupils need to do to reach target levels or grades. This focus is also having the effect of helping the pupils to, 'think more about our learning', as one pupil put it. In the best lessons, high expectations were communicated in an aspirational way to encourage pupils to reach as high as they could.

Inconsistencies remain in the quality of guidance and feedback given to the pupils. Good work habits are not fully established across all subjects and this is detrimental to the good progress required to enable pupils to achieve as well as they might. For example, teachers do not all convey high enough expectations to the pupils about taking care over the quality or presentation of their work. This was evident in a number of books scrutinised during the visit that contained poorly presented and unfinished work. Marking of work is also of variable quality; although some good guidance is provided to help pupils identify for themselves the next steps in their learning, there are still too many instances where marking is infrequent or where the comments are too general to offer real guidance.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it ensures that all students make fast enough progress – satisfactory
- Implement the new systems for tracking pupils' progress and ensure that they result in effective target-setting and academic guidance – satisfactory

## Leadership and management

The headteacher has established teams of staff who are working together effectively to tackle key priorities and increase the momentum of improvement. Senior leaders have clearly-defined responsibilities and are becoming more established in their individual roles. Together, they have refined improvement plans and prioritised actions to increase their clarity and purpose for all staff. They evaluate regularly the effectiveness of strategies to improve outcomes for pupils and have a secure understanding of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are very thorough, and the outcomes from this monitoring are used effectively to identify good classroom practice and aspects that require further improvement.

Middle leaders have a more secure understanding of their accountability. They are more confident to take responsibility for the implementation of agreed procedures and value the support of senior leaders, who they feel are approachable and willing to listen to any concerns or ideas that they might have. Quality assurance of subject departments by senior staff is thorough and is regarded by subject leaders as very rigorous, while being supportive and developmental. This process has also enabled all staff to be clear about their responsibility for the quality of learning in their classes.

The school's physical education and ICT specialism is beginning to have an impact on pupils' engagement and attitudes to learning. The director of specialism and the key subject leaders have promoted the sharing of good practice to improve the quality of provision. An 'Intervention Fund' has been established which allows any subject or pastoral area to bid for funding to enhance pupils' learning. The involvement of a growing number of pupils as 'Sports Leaders' has had a positive impact on developing both their self-confidence and their ability to be active learners. This initiative is now spreading to other areas and there are now 'Languages Leaders' and 'Literacy Leaders'.

Within this generally positive picture of improvement, a few inconsistencies remain in the quality of management at middle leadership level and also in classroom practice. Nevertheless, systems and procedures for addressing these and, subsequently, establishing greater consistency across the school are in place and have already begun to have a positive impact in some areas.

The IEB has a secure awareness of the progress made by the school over recent months. The school's budget deficit is being managed effectively and is reducing in planned stages without detriment to pupils. Since the last monitoring visit, a shadow governing body has been established. Members have met twice, and membership of the various committees has been decided, taking advantage of the range of expertise of individual governors. There is a clear understanding of where further representation is needed on the shadow governing body; for example, in community and parental representation. To ensure a smooth transition in governance, time during the summer term is being used to prepare and train governors for their new roles.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that the governance and leadership and management at all levels are fully effective – good

#### External support

The local authority has realigned its own plans to respond more closely to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Significant funding has also been released by the local authority to enable leaders to implement plans to improve the quality of ICT provision across the school.

The school improvement partner visits the school regularly and has been responsive to the school's needs, for example, in resolving staffing issues and brokering targeted support. Consultant support has been valued highly by the school and has contributed to improvements in subject leadership and the quality of teaching and learning. The partnership established between the headteacher and the National Leader of Education continues to be very effective. It has changed in its character since the previous visit, reflecting the changing school priorities and links with other senior leaders from the partner school have been established to build the capacity of middle leaders who are less experienced.

#### Priorities for further improvement

The priorities remain those identified at the time of the last inspection.