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20 November 2009

Ms Anne Quaile  
Headteacher  
Handsworth Grange Community Sports College  
Handsworth Grange Road  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S13 9HJ

Dear Ms Quaile

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Handsworth Grange  
Community Sports College

Following my visit with Kath Halifax, Peter Bannon and Jim Bennetts, additional inspectors, to your school on 18 and 19 November 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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

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



## Report from the third monitoring visit 18–19 November 2009

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 41 parts of lessons and four registration periods. Documents were scrutinised and meetings held with the headteacher and senior leadership team, other nominated staff, groups of pupils, members of the interim executive board (IEB) and shadow governing body and two representatives of the local authority including the School Improvement Partner.

### Context

Since the last monitoring visit, staffing has stabilised. Two additional appointments have been made to the senior leadership team.

### Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Results attained in the summer of 2009 showed improvement from 2008. In particular, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C increased by 16% to 66% and results in the specialist subjects of physical education (PE) and information and communication technology (ICT) were high. While overall attainment has risen and is broadly in line with the national average, the number of pupils gaining five good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics was still below the national average. Variations persist in pupils' achievement between subjects and results in mathematics and technology are too low. Furthermore, a significant number of girls who were the most able on entry to the school did not achieve as well as they should. However, targeted groups of pupils have benefited from strategies used to raise their achievement more rapidly and the most recent assessment information indicates that more pupils are on track to meet challenging targets in different year groups.

Lesson observations confirm that the rate of pupils' progress has improved since the last monitoring inspection. However, the pace of learning remains variable between subjects. Pupils report that they enjoy their learning more and are more actively engaged in the range of activities that they experience. They make greatest progress where teachers plan lessons that are tailored precisely to meet their needs. Learning slows where assessment information is not used as effectively to support planning or where the behaviour of a small minority of pupils hampers the learning of others.

Tracking systems put in place last year have been embedded and school leaders are confident that teachers' assessments are broadly accurate. Intervention strategies used with pupils over the last year have contributed to the rise in standards in 2009 and current progress being made. Assessment information is used more confidently by staff to identify where underachievement persists so that provision can be tailored to meet the needs of targeted pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement – satisfactory

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

As a result of a number of effective initiatives, pupils' attendance continues to improve. In addition, the proportion of persistent absentees has reduced since the last monitoring visit, though it is still too high. Pupils are more punctual to lessons and generally settle quickly to work. Pupils' behaviour has also improved resulting in less disruption to lessons. However, this is not always so in older year groups where, at times, lively behaviour limits learning. Furthermore, some staff are occasionally too accepting of inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour around the school has also improved, although too many pupils disregard the guidance for walking along corridors or on staircases. This causes congestion and occasionally leads to pushing and inappropriate verbal comments.

Pupils are positive about the changes since the last visit, commenting that since a uniform was introduced at the start of the school year they feel part of a community. They say they feel more safe and secure, and that incidences of bullying have reduced. A more effective use of tutorial time is contributing to pupils' personal development; and the focus on self and peer assessment in lessons allows them to recognise what they have achieved and areas they need to improve. Increased progress in ICT and English, alongside growing self-confidence, contributes to pupils' employment chances, though this is not always so in mathematics.

#### The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved further since the last monitoring inspection. Inspectors' judgements continue to match broadly the views of school leaders. Senior leaders and heads of subject have continued their high level of lesson observation, providing helpful written feedback. Leaders use best practice routinely, for example in specialist subjects, to support teachers seeking improvement in their practice. The systems for informal coaching and more formal mentoring are valued. A number of teachers have improved their practice since the last visit as a result of the additional support that they have received. There are opportunities for sharing good practice and for talking through issues related to teaching and learning. Staff say that morale is strong and that all are keen to find ways to improve practice.

The great majority of lessons are characterised by harmonious and productive relationships. Attitudes are positive and pupils are generally keen to learn. Many teachers are skilled in putting a stop to distracting behaviour at an early stage by a firm but light touch. In some lessons, however, there is too much chatter or a mild undercurrent of low-level disruption.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and the great majority of teachers present ideas clearly and with enthusiasm. Many lessons include a variety of activities that motivate pupils and sustain their interest. The use of ICT and modern technologies in lessons has improved and is increasing pupils' active engagement in their learning. Attention is also paid to improving literacy in many lessons, although the development of numeracy across the curriculum is less well developed. Pupils are often encouraged to assess their own work and that of others, for example in PE and humanities subjects. This focuses their attention on success criteria and the relative strengths and weaknesses in the way a task has been tackled. It helps pupils to learn what to aim for. In some lessons, teachers provide different materials for more or less able groups of pupils. This facilitates discussion and learning and enables pupils to develop their skills and concepts more rapidly. However, this practice is inconsistent across the school.

In the best lessons, a well-judged variation in the challenge of teachers' questioning enhances whole-class discussion, group work and individual progress. As they circulate to check on progress, teachers often make helpful points for improvement in relation to the strengths and weaknesses evident in individual pupil's work. However, opportunities are missed in some lessons to reinforce or extend the learning of all pupils. Occasionally, the teacher does not identify or tackle, misconceptions or only partial understanding are passed over. At other times a lesson can drag at the pace of the slower pupils and those who have finished are left waiting for the next task. Teachers' abilities in developing pupils' listening skills vary. For example, the attention of some pupils drifts while others are giving feedback on their activities. Sometimes, good techniques are used to enable all pupils to contribute, for instance by holding up personal whiteboards with answers; elsewhere, some pupils make many contributions while others are not asked for an answer. Occasionally, teachers do too much of the work and do not thrust enough responsibility onto pupils to come up with ideas.

The quality of marking is variable. Some books have detailed annotation to indicate how improvements could be made. In other cases, marking is thin and opportunities are missed to provide guidance to raise achievement through timely and focused challenge or constructive criticism. In some subjects, pupils have the levels of current work and target levels in their books, but they are not always sure about how to bridge the gap.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably. More focused individual education plans (IEP) and a rationalisation of the Learning Centre have accelerated the progress of those who learn more slowly, as well as improving the provision for those with social, emotional, behavioural and mental health needs. Lesson planning generally takes account of individual needs but the inclusion of personalised individual education plan targets is still too variable.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it ensures that all pupils make fast enough progress – satisfactory

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to work tirelessly and effectively with staff teams to tackle priorities for improvement. She has raised and sustained high morale among staff and pupils and this is reflected in the positive learning environment that has become more established across the school. She has tackled remaining staffing issues with determination and has high expectations of all staff. With the good support of senior and middle leaders, the headteacher has completed an intensive process of school self-review to evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' outcomes. She is ambitious for the school and can demonstrate the positive impact of actions to secure improvement for targeted groups of pupils. Leaders recognise, however, that some variations persist and that time is needed for strategies to become embedded and applied consistently, for example in improving the quality of teaching.

Senior leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly understood. A collegiate approach to improvement is becoming embedded and used consistently. Rigorous monitoring and review of progress has produced an extensive range of evidence that enables leaders to evaluate progress made in tackling key priorities. However, leaders recognise the need for succinct evaluations to clarify the strategic overview of progress and prioritise even more precisely the remaining challenges. The leadership team is less reliant on external support as they have become more familiar with their roles. Those who are new to their roles in the leadership team are quickly developing their skills. Leadership of the subject specialisms continues to be highly effective and subject leaders for PE and ICT make a good contribution to driving improvement across the school.

Middle leadership has improved. This is because lines of accountability are clearly understood. Information gleaned from the data collections is used to form the agenda for meetings between senior leaders and heads of department. Detailed assessment information for different groups of pupils is used to identify precisely what works well and where improvement is required. Staff are becoming more confident in identifying and implementing strategies to raise achievement. Although there are still some variations in performance between subjects and groups of pupils, gaps are closing as the legacy of past underachievement is tackled more rigorously.

Good progress has been made in establishing a governing body to replace the IEB from January 2010. Governors with a broad range of expertise have been recruited and allocated to committees to focus on different aspects of the school's work. The school is particularly pleased that the shadow governing body includes parent representation. Training needs have been identified to support individual governors

who are new to the role. The shadow governing body is participating in current IEB meetings, offering both support and challenge in their discussion with school leaders.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Implement the new systems for tracking pupils' progress and ensure that they result in effective target-setting and academic guidance – satisfactory
- Ensure that the governance and leadership and management at all levels are fully effective – good

### External support

School leaders have valued the support of local authority officers in managing a significant budget deficit. A recovery plan is now in the advanced stages of preparation offering a systematic approach to reducing the school debt without compromising opportunities for pupils. Local authority support and that from the partner school has reduced, reflecting the growing capacity within the school to secure improvement. The local authority is seeking to secure additional support for senior leadership as the initial stages of planning for the Building Schools for the Future programme at Handsworth Grange get underway.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Accelerate progress in mathematics in order to raise attainment more rapidly.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by improving the match of activities to pupils' needs and reducing inconsistencies in teaching.
- Refine and simplify evaluation procedures to clarify the strategic overview of progress and prioritise future actions.