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24 September 2010

Mr Neil Clark  
Headteacher  
The Dearne High – A Specialist Humanities College  
Goldthorpe Road  
Goldthorpe  
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South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Clark

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Dearne High – A Specialist Humanities College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Ray Biglin, additional inspector, and I inspected your school on 23 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on special thanks to the students who met with us during our visit.

As a result of the inspection on 24 and 25 March 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Standards are rising as a result of improvements in behaviour and teaching. In 2009, the proportion of Year 11 students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to G increased by five percentage points and closed the gap on the national average. Initiatives to improve students' attainment in English and mathematics are having a positive effect. School data show that students in Key Stage 3 are making better than expected progress in English and mathematics and an increasing number of students are reaching the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6. Over 40 of the current Year 10 students achieved a high grade GCSE pass in mathematics this summer which boosted their confidence and provided the incentive to work towards the highest grades. In 2009, the proportion of Year 11 students leaving the school with five or more high grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, reached the National Challenge floor target of 30% for the first time, an increase of

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eight percentage points since the last inspection. The final figure for 2010 is likely to remain the same, however, showing that whilst the gains made have been maintained, the improving trend in English and mathematics is not yet fully secure.

The school has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and is well placed to continue the improvement. Teachers are making increasing use of good quality tracking data to plan lessons but further work is needed to ensure that activities are matched closely to the differing needs of all students. The quality of marking is getting better with students receiving more detailed feedback on their work. Teachers are also making more effective use of assessment to enhance learning in lessons.

There has been considerable improvement in behaviour. Students report that behaviour, both in and out of lessons, is getting better and that behaviour policies are being applied more consistently. Effective multi-agency work is improving the behaviour and attendance of some of the most challenging and vulnerable students and enabling them to make better progress. In 2009, analysis of Key Stage 4 results showed that Year 11 students with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make the progress expected of them but this year's results show a marked improvement.

Senior leaders are focused and hardworking with an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. The headteacher is a very experienced and strong leader and is relentlessly driving improvements. He is being ably supported, during the long-term absence of his deputy headteacher, by a capable team of assistant headteachers. The team is developing well and playing a key role in bringing about improvements.

Teachers from the specialist humanities subjects are sharing good practice as part of the strategy to improve teaching. Innovative projects, developed through the specialism, are raising the self-esteem of students by increasing their knowledge and appreciation of local culture and history. The projects involve partner primary schools and are promoting community cohesion. The school has met and exceeded some of its specialist targets and missed others.

The school has received good support from its National Challenge Adviser and from the local authority.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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## Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2009

- Reduce the variations in the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils make consistently good or better progress and reach higher standards, especially in mathematics and English.
- Make better use of data on pupils' attainment and progress so that activities and tasks in lessons are matched closely to pupils' learning needs.
- Improve the behaviour of the minority of pupils who intimidate others at the school, outside of lessons.