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11 November 2010

Mr P King
Headteacher
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South Yorkshire
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Dear Mr King

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Darfield Foulstone School of Creative Arts

Following my visit with Ann Taylor, additional inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 November 2010, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. 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 not be appointed**.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Barnsley.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010

- Close the gap between attainment at Darfield Foulstone and the national average by:
 - making sure that students of all abilities make consistently good progress
 - improving attainment and achievement in mathematics and English.

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that teachers use information about students' prior achievement and potential in order to plan lessons that meet the needs of everyone in the class
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of assessment to enhance learning by developing more skilful questioning techniques and improving the quality of marking
 - introducing a coordinated approach to identifying common weaknesses in teaching across the school and provide appropriate training and development.

- Ensure that quality assurance is more robust and effective by:
 - introducing systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work especially teaching
 - ensuring that the self-evaluation process is more incisive and accurate
 - making certain that there is a consistent approach from all managers to eradicating underperformance.

Special measures: monitoring of The Darfield Foulstone School of Creative Arts

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 20 part-lessons, one tutorial period and one assembly. Documents were scrutinised and meetings held with the headteacher and other nominated staff, two groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, the National Challenge Adviser and a representative from the local authority.

Context

There have been a number of changes to staffing since the last inspection. Ten new staff joined the school in September, including seven newly qualified teachers. A new Chairperson has been appointed to the school improvement strategy group, the committee of the governing body that is monitoring the progress made by the school in tackling areas for improvement.

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

Unvalidated results from examinations taken by Year 11 pupils in summer 2010 indicate that the school's predictions for improvement were accurate. Targeted strategies used to raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, as part of the National Challenge initiative, have proved effective. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics rose and matched the school's challenging target of 41%. Targets were exceeded in relation to the proportion of pupils who attained five A* to C passes at GCSE and the percentage who attained five A* to G passes. Outcomes for pupils taking specialist subjects, including performing arts, contributed well to a rising trend in attainment by the end of Year 11. Analysis of additional data provided by the school indicates that the attainment of a small group of pupils was better than might be expected because of the varied curricular pathways that engaged them more effectively in learning.

Although leaders have a generally accurate view of the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 4, systems to track progress precisely during Key Stage 3 are only just becoming established. The most recent assessment information provides, for the first time, a summary that enables senior and middle leaders to reflect on progress made by pupils in Key Stage 3. These data reveal that too many pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not on track to meet challenging targets to raise attainment. Evidence indicates that there are significant variations both between and within subjects.



Progress in lessons remains variable and generally reflects the quality of teaching. Learning is most effective where teaching challenges pupils to become active participants and ongoing assessment to support learning provides clear guidance to enable pupils to meet challenging objectives. In too many lessons, however, activities are not tailored sufficiently to meet pupils' needs and, consequently, the pace of learning slows. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 3 where assessment information is not used consistently or effectively enough to inform lesson planning.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- close the gap between attainment at Darfield Foulstone and the national average – **satisfactory**

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour in lessons remains satisfactory overall. Where teaching captures pupils' interest, their attitudes are positive and their expectations of what they can achieve are raised. Pupils reported that they enjoy lessons more where they are challenged and supported to do their best. However, pupils become passive and less responsive when teachers' expectations are low. Inspectors agreed with pupils that there are still instances where behaviour disrupts their learning. This is because teaching in these lessons does not meet pupils' needs; agreed routines are not consistently followed and behaviour management is ineffective. Pupils generally behave sensibly around school. However, on occasions, boisterous behaviour on corridors is not managed effectively between lessons and this has the potential to undermine an effective start to the next lesson.

The effectiveness of provision

Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning has worked effectively with a senior colleague from the National Support School to develop and implement a system for monitoring the quality of teaching. Senior and middle leaders have received appropriate training and some are contributing more effectively to a cycle of lesson observations to identify strengths and weaknesses. The outcomes of these observations broadly match those of inspectors.

The deputy headteacher is establishing a more coordinated approach to tackling weaknesses in teaching. Best practice in specialist subjects is being shared more routinely to improve provision in other subject areas. The coaching programme provides regular opportunities for teachers to develop and share good progress and consultant support is targeted more effectively to meet specific development needs, for example, in science. Staff speak positively about the impact of this support in helping them to improve their practice. The 'Transforming Learning' group has gathered pupils' views about their learning preferences; their responses are



informing plans to develop teaching strategies that will actively engage pupils and increase their enjoyment in learning.

Where teaching is most effective, well-planned sequences of interesting activities sustain the pace of learning well and enable pupils to achieve challenging learning outcomes. However, observations during the inspection confirm the school's view that inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. Teachers are not always consistent in their planning for all their lessons to ensure that the full range of ability or needs is taken into account. Consequently, the pace of learning slows too often because some pupils are insufficiently challenged while others find the work too hard. Teachers use questioning more frequently to check pupils' progress. However, opportunities are missed to test pupils' understanding further to extend their learning. Ongoing techniques to assess pupils' learning during lessons are used more frequently. However, they are not always effective at identifying what pupils know or what they need to do to improve. In some instances, where lessons extend for longer than one period, the pace of learning slows because activities do not fully sustain pupils' interest. The quality of marking is improving; older pupils reported that they value the feedback they receive and find it helpful in identifying how they can improve the quality of their work.

Although there has been some improvement since the last monitoring visit, there are still too many instances where the quality of teaching is inadequate. This presents a significant barrier to progress in overcoming underachievement and enabling all pupils to achieve as well as they should. Hence, the judgement that progress is satisfactory, is finely balanced.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching – **satisfactory**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Positive steps have been taken to establish a more reliable and rigorous approach to the school's quality assurance procedures since the last monitoring inspection. The headteacher has used his knowledge of the individual strengths of members of the senior leadership team to redefine roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. Senior leaders have responded quickly and rigorously to these changes. For example, the implementation of the raising attainment plan has been steered effectively by the deputy headteacher with responsibility for this aspect of school improvement. Consequently, outcomes for targeted groups of pupils have improved. The deputy headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning has managed skilfully a wide range of activities to establish a deeper understanding of the quality of provision; this has been achieved in a short period of time.

The quality of middle leadership is improving quickly. This is because the simplified lines of accountability have increased opportunities for middle leaders to take greater responsibility for securing improvement in their subject area. For example,



subject leaders for English and mathematics have responded positively to the demands of the raising attainment plan; they feel that they are held to account through line management meetings and are, in turn, more able to challenge and support members of their team. This is a view reflected by other middle leaders who are becoming more empowered to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and the impact of strategies to raise attainment. However, the school is aware that weaknesses remain in the effectiveness of leadership in some subjects. In particular, the support for newly qualified teachers is too variable between different subject areas.

Actions taken by senior and middle leaders have strengthened the structure and reliability of systems to quality assure the school's work; firm foundations have been established on which to build. However, the capacity for further rapid improvement is fragile. This is because the direction provided by the headteacher is not rigorous enough to drive improvement at the pace required. The school has adopted the local authority's improvement plan which includes appropriate actions to overcome key weaknesses. However, the headteacher has not amended this plan to reflect the school's changing priorities. Furthermore, there is little evidence to show that the outcomes of monitoring by senior leaders are used effectively by the headteacher to evaluate the impact of actions taken or provide the challenge required to accelerate progress. This poses a significant threat to the ability of leaders at all levels to maintain the momentum of change that has accelerated since the last monitoring inspection.

The level of challenge provided by the school improvement strategy group has increased. Members of the group hold leaders more closely to account by using the 'milestones' document that accompanies the school improvement plan to check progress and identify any areas where plans have slipped.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- ensure that quality assurance is more robust and effective – **satisfactory**

External support

The local authority provides good levels of challenge and is responsive to identified areas that require for support. For example, a school improvement officer has recently been assigned to work with the science department to improve the effectiveness of leadership and provide support for newly qualified teachers. The National Challenge Adviser continues to monitor the impact of the raising attainment plan on a regular basis with senior leaders and his role has been extended to support plans to develop self-evaluation procedures. The support provided by the National Support School has been targeted well and is valued by staff. The induction mentor at the National Support School has intensified her support in response to concerns relating to support for newly qualified teachers.



Priorities for further improvement

- Eradicate inadequate teaching.
- Increase the proportion and consistency of good learning, particularly in Key Stage 3, by using assessment information to tailor activities to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Strengthen the rigour of direction provided by the headteacher to drive improvement at the pace required.