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18 July 2011

Ms S Bell and Mr S Ely  
Joint headteachers  
The Darfield Foulstone School of Creative Arts  
Nanny Marr Road  
Darfield  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S73 9AB

Dear Ms Bell and Mr Ely,

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

Following my visit with Andrew Henderson, additional inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 July 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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**

January 2011



## **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 co-ordinated 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 fourth monitoring inspection from 14 to 15 July 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the joint headteachers, other nominated staff, a group of students, representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Staffing has remained stable since the last monitoring inspection. During this monitoring inspection, Year 10 was on an educational visit, as part of the school's rewards scheme, and the school hosted an event for a group of Year 6 students who will transfer to the school in September.

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

Students are making better progress in lessons because teachers have higher expectations about what they will learn. This is because assessment information has been simplified and is presented in an easy-to-use format so that underachievement can be identified and tackled swiftly. Teachers are becoming more confident in their analysis of progress made by different groups of students, which is enabling them to develop learning targets that are tailored better to meet a broad range of needs. Students are also growing in confidence to assess their own progress. They have a good understanding of their targets and are developing their skills to identify the next steps in their learning.

Students are more actively engaged in their learning and they enjoy more-frequent opportunities to work independently, or in small groups. Learning proceeds briskly where activities capture students' interest, enabling them to build on prior knowledge and apply it to solve new problems. Effective questioning enables students to reflect on their learning and identify how they might improve further. The pace of learning slows where teachers dominate for too much of the lesson or activities lack challenge. Occasionally, tasks are not broken down sufficiently to enable all students to access the learning activity and this hinders their progress.

Early results from examinations taken by Year 11 students, for example, in physical education and creative arts subjects, indicate that they have met or exceeded targets. Current data indicate that students are closer to meeting targets in GCSE examinations. Students currently in Year 7 have made satisfactory progress relative to their starting points when they joined the school last September. However, the most recent assessments indicate that, while gaps in attainment are closing, the progress made by students in other year groups, remains inconsistent.

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

- Close the gap between attainment at Darfield Foulstone and the national average - satisfactory

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Students' behaviour continues to improve and attitudes to learning are becoming more positive. These improvements are in response to a more rigorous application of the school's systems of rewards and sanctions. A strong emphasis has been placed on establishing a culture of success. For example, the 'Fantastic Fridays' initiative celebrates weekly achievements and has proved popular with both students and staff. Absence from school is tackled consistently and rigorously so that improvements have been sustained and attendance remains broadly average.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching is continuing to improve because of an increased and consistent focus on planning that identifies the small steps required to accelerate the pace of students' learning. However, while plans routinely link intended learning outcomes with assessment criteria, activities are not always adapted sufficiently to meet the full range of students' different needs.

Teachers use a variety of checks to assess the progress that students are making in lessons. Assessment criteria are used more effectively to guide students and help them to improve their work. More opportunities are also provided for peer- and self-assessment, which enables students to identify what they know or can do with greater precision. However, teachers do not always adjust their plans swiftly enough to respond to changing learning needs as the lesson proceeds. Additional adults provide helpful support for targeted students so that they can participate more actively in the lessons. However, while support is effective in developing students' basic learning skills, opportunities are missed to develop specific subject knowledge and skills.

A whole-school professional dialogue about improving the quality of teaching is becoming embedded. The role of the 'Transforming Learning Group' has been extended and strengthened further. A programme of paired observations involving all staff has resulted in the identification of common characteristics of good practice. This has been followed up by 'open observation' weeks, during which staff are invited to observe examples of practice that they wish to develop or include in their own teaching. This innovative approach has contributed well to the development of a supportive environment in which teachers are more confident to adopt new strategies to support learning.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching - good

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The joint headteachers provide strong leadership and have harnessed the energies of leaders at all levels to tackle the remaining priorities with determination and commitment. For example, a collaborative approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning has contributed to an increase in the pace of change. The simplified approach to tracking students' progress is also being used more effectively by senior and middle leaders to target strategies that are designed to improve basic literacy skills and close gaps in prior learning.

A strategic approach has been adopted to increase the effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leadership of this aspect of the school's work has been strengthened and recent initiatives, such as the 'teacher-learning support assistant partnership agreement', have the potential to identify the most appropriate support for students with specific learning needs more precisely.

The outcomes of rigorous monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and many middle leaders inform planning and provide a clear focus for further improvement. Members of the governing body make a good contribution to this process and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, leaders recognise that staff are not all held fully to account for the progress made by every individual student, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- Ensure that quality assurance is more robust and effective - good

## **External support**

Local authority support has become more tailored since the last monitoring inspection and is responsive to needs identified by school leaders. For example, consultant support has been valued in developing assessment grids to inform teachers' planning. Links have been maintained with the partner school in York which continue to be valued by leaders, for example, in improving the provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Increase the extent to which all staff are held to account for the progress made by every student, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.