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31 January 2013

Mrs Tracy Hush
Headteacher
Norham High School
Alnwick Avenue
North Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE29 7BU

Dear Mrs Hush

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Norham High School

Following my visit to your school on 30 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, two senior teachers, three representatives of the governing body and a senior school improvement officer from North Tyneside local authority. The school's raising achievement plan, local authority action plan and other key documents were evaluated.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school's organisation since the inspection.

Main findings

Senior leaders and the governing body acted quickly to amend their raising achievement plan following the inspection. The plan is detailed and well organised to tackle all the recommendations identified within the inspection report fully. Very clear and regular monitoring processes have been re-enforced to ensure that progress towards the improvements required can be monitored. However, leaders are aware that timescales for actions planned need to be clearer in some instances. The plan includes challenging whole-school targets for students' attainment and rates of progress over time. However, there are no specific targets for the groups of students identified in the inspection report whose

progress is not as good as others including girls, more able students and students with a disability or special educational need. This makes it difficult for senior leaders, including governors, to check the impact of actions on such students' achievements.

Leaders wasted no time in implementing the revised plan and a range of detailed monitoring 'files' pay testament to the array of work carried out. The headteacher has already reported progress to 'Norham High School Officer Group', a group set up by the local authority following the inspection to challenge and support leaders in their quest to be good by the time of the next inspection. A significant training programme for teachers has been undertaken with more planned. Recent training has focused on improving teachers' planning, marking and in developing challenging targets. Evidence from written feedback to teachers' following lesson observations show they are left in no doubt about the strengths of the lesson and what needs to be better. Improvement points are checked at the next lesson observation. Performance management arrangements for staff have been strengthened with all staff having specific targets to improve student progress.

The governing body has taken swift action to recruit two parent governors. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know they too need to improve their effectiveness. To that end they have set up two working groups with one particularly aimed at improving their skills in challenging the school leaders through a better first-hand knowledge of what is taking place in the school and improved understanding of student progress data. They have developed their own action plan with a number of actions including the possibility of working with an outstanding governing body.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- clarify timescales in the raising achievement plan further and refine targets and milestones to make sure the impact of actions taken can be measured over time as well as at the end of the year; particularly for girls, more able students and those who have a special educational need or disability
- develop proposals for governors to work with an outstanding governing body, to enable them to understand how well highly effective governors can help drive improvement.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has received high quality and timely support from the local authority officers who quickly convened a monitoring group to check regularly the progress the school is making to become a good school by the next inspection. They have successfully brokered school-to-school support from local good and outstanding schools to aid leaders in their quest for rapid improvement and are providing specialist advisory support in English, mathematics, science and special educational needs. Specialists will work with middle leaders to help them raise standards, hasten students' progress and further develop their leadership skills.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector