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Dr Iain Shaw
Headteacher
Prudhoe Community High School
Moor Road
Prudhoe
Northumberland
NE42 5LJ

Dear Dr Shaw

Special measures monitoring inspection of Prudhoe Community High School

Following my visit to your school on 14 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with three groups of students, the headteacher, three members of the senior leadership team, two local authority officers, the Chair of the Governing Body and the manager of the on-site media centre. The local authority's statement of action, the school's action plan, lesson observation records and the most recent self-evaluation documents were evaluated.

Context

There have been no significant changes at the school since the recent section 5 inspection.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher, with extensive support from the local authority, has responded positively in addressing the weaknesses with regard to students' safety. While appropriate action is being taken to ensure that access to the school buildings is carefully monitored, formal verification that all matters have been fully completed should be forwarded to Her Majesty's Inspector as soon as possible following the inspection visit. All issues regarding secure access to the school's computer systems have been addressed.

Action has been too slow in response to the judgements about teaching and governance. Two departments have been reviewed and changes have been made to the ways teaching is monitored. Paired observations are becoming more systematic and more rigorous. The local authority has brokered partnerships with successful local schools to help the school assure this. However, the impact of these actions by the school's leadership on the quality of teaching is not yet clear. Leaders need to move more quickly. Where there has been prompt action, in changes to the school's marking policy, for example, students report positively about how it is helping them to improve their work. However, there is urgent need to tackle the school's weaknesses with more conviction and drive if matters are to be driven forward as quickly as they need to be.

The school's action plan does not focus sufficiently on making improvements to students' learning. Nor is the plan clear enough about how actions are to be measured, especially for those students in receipt of free school meals. The roles and responsibilities of the governing body are not clearly set out in the plan. The group set up by the governing body to monitor the effectiveness of the school's plan has only met recently for the first time. Additional work needs to be done to ensure that governors have a clear role to play in improving the school. This includes providing the governing body with additional support so that governors have the skills and knowledge needed to challenge the school's leadership about how effectively pupil premium funding is being used.

A review of governance has only just started and this has delayed the pace of improvement to the governing body's work.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Executive Director Wellbeing and Community Services for Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector