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31 January 2014

Mrs Stephanie Hall  
Acting Headteacher  
Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School  
Lindisfarne Road  
Alnwick  
Northumberland  
NE66 1AX

Dear Mrs Hall

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 the acting headteacher, senior staff, Chair of the Hard Federation Governing Body (HFGB), chair and members of the steering committee, lead headteacher of the federation, School Improvement Partner and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

The substantive headteacher is on long-term absence due to ill health; in her absence the deputy headteacher has replaced her as acting headteacher. The steering committee, which oversees the monitoring of this school and is made up of members of the HFGB, has been restructured and has many new members. This committee has formed a smaller school improvement group which meets every two weeks and has responsibility for monitoring the impact of the school's action plan. The newly appointed Chair of the HFGB sits on both of these committees. A new and experienced School Improvement Partner has been employed by the local authority to add support and challenge to the school.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The substantive headteacher, in conjunction with the new School Improvement Partner, has drawn up an action plan to tackle the weaknesses identified in the recent inspection. Unfortunately, due to very recent discussions with the Department for Education, this action plan does not cover the likely time period from now to the next inspection. The plan is heavily reliant on the school making all necessary improvements by June 2014, which is unrealistic. While it contains appropriate support from a local teaching alliance and headteachers and personnel from the three other schools in the federation, it is not clear how this support will improve different levels of leadership within the school. The actions have not been sufficiently prioritised and all actions are happening in too short a space of time to be effective. The plan needs to be revised as a matter of urgency to ensure that actions are prioritised, cover the appropriate timescale and have clear milestones and measurable outcomes, so that they can be regularly monitored by the school improvement group and the steering committee.

Senior leaders have brokered support from Cramlington Learning Village to carry out a baseline assessment of teaching and learning. This will be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning so that a more detailed action plan for improvement can be drawn up. The school has yet to make the link between the quality of teaching over time, the progress pupils make and the work in pupils' books sufficiently in the current action plan to drive improvement and this needs strengthening. Senior leaders have devised a new system to track the progress that different pupil groups make over time and this is currently helping teachers to plan interventions for pupils who are not making good progress.

The steering committee has been very active in recent weeks. It has met with parents to gauge their views of how the school can improve. It is already prioritising ways to improve communication with parents and the new Chair of the HFGB sees this as very important in ensuring that the whole community moves forward together. An external review of school governance has been carried out for Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School governance which has identified some problems with the structures of the HFGB across the four different schools. Consequently, the HFGB is currently carrying out a skills audit of its members which will lead into a governing body action plan across the federation which also needs to be included in this school's action plan.

### **External Support**

The local authority acted quickly to identify a School Improvement Partner with the necessary experience to support and challenge the school. He has helped the headteacher draw up the action plan, but was also under the misapprehension that the plan needed to be completed by June 2014. The support brokered by him to improve teaching and learning is appropriate and he is also carrying out a coaching and mentoring model with the acting headteacher and senior leaders to strengthen leadership capacity within the school. The local authority's statement of action and subsequent plan lack milestones for improvement and need to be much clearer in who is carrying out a support role and who is monitoring the impact of the action plan over time and reporting back to the steering committee and the local authority.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not 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 Hard Federation Governing Body and the Executive Director Wellbeing and Community Services for Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost

**Her Majesty's Inspector**