

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566863

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jbenett@cfbt.com



20 November 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 with Iain Veitch, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 November 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 previous monitoring inspection.

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

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

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

Yours sincerely

David Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013.

- Improve all teaching to a consistently good or better standard by:
 - creating a climate for learning, with high levels of interesting and well-targeted activities that enthuses and motivates pupils to want to learn
 - ensuring that all teachers recognise when to move pupils on to more challenging and open-ended activities that test their thinking and promote their independence in learning
 - challenging pupils to link their learning in mathematics to everyday life
 - ensuring that all teachers make the best possible use of the directed improvement time initiative, which allows the pupils to modify, refine, correct and improve upon previously completed work
 - ensuring that all withdrawal lessons for pupils who need extra help with key literacy and numeracy skills are challenging enough to help them make good or better progress
 - making sure pupils understand which aspects of their personal attributes and qualities are needed to help them achieve their learning targets.

- Increase the capacity of leaders and managers to drive school improvement by:
 - formulating a more accurate self-assessment of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve
 - ensuring that the school development plan provides a clearer vision for school improvement and is shared more openly and regularly with parents
 - making sure that all information used to review school development plan priorities provides governors with regular, accurate and up-to-date progress measures
 - using up-to-date performance information so that prompt and decisive action is taken to improve the progress of all pupils and close the gaps in performance between different groups, especially those known to be eligible for free school meals
 - ensuring any assessment of the quality of teaching is linked specifically to improvements in pupils' attainment and progress
 - ensuring that parents have access through the school's website to all the information the school is required to make available.

- A review of governance is recommended with particular emphasis on the school's use of pupil premium funding.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, a group of teachers and the School Improvement Partner. In addition, they met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body of the Alnwick federation, the Chair of the school steering committee and three other governors. They observed a range of lessons in English, mathematics and foundation subjects in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8, together with the support provided in the intervention unit. During these observations inspectors spoke informally with pupils and checked their work. A range of documentation, including the school development plan and the minutes of governing body and other meetings, was scrutinised.

Context

The school continues to be one of the three schools of the hard federation of Alnwick schools: this school, the Duchess' Community High School and the Duke's Middle School. The substantive headteacher, who had been on long-term absence, left the school in the summer and the school hopes to appoint a new substantive headteacher in January 2015. A new head of mathematics has been appointed and will also take up post in January. The school and the local authority are currently considering a number of models for the reorganisation of schools in the area.

In September the school moved to a more 'primary' model of teaching for Years 5 and 6, where pupils are taught by fewer teachers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics improved to well above the national average for Year 6 pupils in 2014. A detailed scrutiny of books confirms that the school's assessment of attainment on entry to the school in Year 5 is accurate and that the progress of pupils is improving in all areas. School systems for checking how well pupils are doing are now embedded and correctly identify those who are underachieving. This allows teachers to support these pupils with carefully targeted work. There is some indication that the achievement of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils from service families is improving and that gaps are closing as a result of such strategies.

Lesson observations and a detailed analysis of pupils' work confirm that by the end of Year 8, pupils have made good progress in reading but that opportunities to write independently and at length are still too limited, particularly in Years 7 and 8. As a result, progress in writing is not good enough yet. In mathematics there has been a determined effort to extend opportunities for pupils to engage in problem-solving activities and this is raising pupils' interest, adding challenge to all abilities and improving progress in the subject.

The quality of teaching

Senior and middle leaders are making determined efforts to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. There is evidence that teaching standards are rising and that expectations of what pupils are capable of are higher. Pupils are making much more progress as the level of challenge increases, pupil engagement rises and a faster pace to learning develops.

Assessment information is now used more effectively by teachers to inform their planning. In the majority of English and mathematics lessons seen and in pupils' work, teachers incorporate tasks which are pitched at different levels to match pupils' abilities and teachers use questioning more effectively to check pupils' understanding. Marking shows an improvement across the school. Where pupils' books are marked well, helpful feedback is provided, making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve further. The directed improvement time initiative, in which pupils begin each lesson by improving their work from the previous lesson, is used effectively in many lessons to drive forward pupils' understanding and progress. Discussions with pupils in all year groups confirm the value of this work.

Accurate and regular pupil assessment means that teachers are now much more aware of the attainment gaps between different groups of pupils and all teachers have identified who these pupils are. There is a whole-school focus on improving the progress of those pupils supported by the pupil premium funding (additional government money) and the work of the new intervention unit to support pupils who fall behind in their work is helping to close these gaps.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There were no areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection around behaviour or safety. In all lessons observed the behaviour of pupils continues to be exemplary. The attitude of pupils to learning has improved as teaching has become more engaging and the curriculum more challenging. Discussions with pupils confirm that lessons are more interesting and that behaviour both in lessons and around the school has improved.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have encouraged the teaching staff to take increased responsibility for their work and for the progress of all pupils in their classes. Middle leaders report that they are now held accountable for their area of responsibility but believe that they are now both supported and trusted. Staff morale continues to improve and it is clear that teachers and non-teaching staff are working together with a common purpose to improve the school. Subject leaders are fully involved in data collection, lead regular pupil progress meetings with individual staff and regularly observe teaching and learning.

The governing body, and especially the steering group, now hold senior leaders to account and governors both challenge and support school leaders well. Members of the governing body are now far more active in school and regularly attend school events and hold parent surgeries. Communication between parents and the school has greatly improved since the inspection, although leaders are aware there is still further work to be done in this area.

Leaders and teachers believe that the move to a more 'primary' model of teaching, where pupils are taught by fewer teachers, for Years 5 and 6 from September, has been successful and this is supported by the comments of pupils.

In recent weeks a great deal of the federation governing body's time has been taken up with plans for the possible reorganisation of the schools in the federation but governors must not allow themselves to be distracted from work needed to improve the school.

External support

The School Improvement Partner appointed by the local authority has worked closely with the acting headteacher to develop her skills and to support her in developing leadership capacity across the school. He has worked effectively to support a number of teachers in developing both their skills and their confidence. The school is now developing its own capacity to support middle leaders and teachers when and where required.