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2 February 2015

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

Dear Mrs Hush

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Norham High School

Following my visit to your school on 2 February 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, a group of governors and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also met with the staff. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

- The headteacher, with extensive support from the governing body and the local authority, has responded to the findings from the recent inspection. The school is now taking appropriate action to address the points for improvement identified in the recent inspection report.
- The school's action plan provides clear strategic direction for the work being done and contains appropriate benchmarks to check on progress. However, the plan does not identify clearly who is responsible for leading each action and who is responsible for assessing the impact of these actions.
- A positive start has been made with effective support from Churchill Community College, a local outstanding school, and the local authority. Leaders at the school have introduced more robust systems for ensuring that teachers' judgements about students' work are more consistently accurate. These more accurate assessments now play a key role in discussions that senior staff have with teachers about the progress students are making. They help staff identify more quickly where additional support needs to be put in place so that students can make better progress, although these are early days in this new way of working.
- The roles of middle leaders still need further development. Middle leaders are now more closely involved in monitoring the work of teachers and other adults in their teams. However, more needs to be done to ensure that middle leaders have the skills to hold teams and individual staff members to account for the quality of their work.
- Governors have a clear sense of what needs to be done to ensure that the school improves rapidly. They have refocused their committee structure to reflect the key priorities from the inspection report more clearly. They have also undertaken an audit of governors' skills. As a result, new members have been invited to join the governing body who can add a particular set of skills and insights which will enhance governor capacity to oversee improvements.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Head of Children, Young People and Learning for North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector