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27 February 2015

Ms Deborah Reeman
Headteacher
Prudhoe Community High School
Moor Road
Prudhoe
Northumberland
NE42 5LJ

Dear Ms Reeman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Prudhoe Community High School, Northumberland

Following my visit to your school on 26 February 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 October 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to ensure:

- leaders' check students' progress overtime when carrying out lesson observations by scrutinising students' work and checking teachers' marking in order to more accurately assess the impact of teaching on students' learning
- the action plan includes measurable targets for all year groups and different groups of students identified as underachieving or not attending regularly so the Interim Executive Board (IEB) can check the impact of the actions being taken more clearly from Year 9 to Year 13.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, five members of the senior management team, six representatives of the IEB, a group of students and the Director of Education for Northumberland local authority. You and I visited four classrooms

where we observed students' learning, reviewed their books and spoke to students about their work and the school in general. I scrutinised the school's improvement plans and other information including safer recruitment records and minutes from the most recent IEB meetings.

Context

There have been few changes since the school was taken out of special measures at the last inspection in October 2014. Two staff have recently left the school and two have begun their maternity leave. You remain the acting headteacher and the IEB is in the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher.

Main findings

Building on the school's successful journey out of special measures, you continue to galvanise your senior team, staff and the IEB effectively in a shared passion for students in Prudhoe to achieve their best. Students and staff report, and information about students' current achievements and our joint observations show, students' progress is hastening in lessons. More needs to be done to ensure all students make the best possible progress and a range of appropriate actions have been implemented to improve matters further. Improvement has come because of the strong and continuing focus on building teachers' skills through a range of professional development activities. These include sharing good practice across the school, coaching weaker staff or providing targeted improvement activities for teachers whose teaching is not up to scratch. You are also aware that the school improvement plan needs further work to include more measurable targets for students achievement across the school as well as for groups that have been identified as underachieving or not attending as well as they should; rather than just targets for the current Year 11 and Year 13 students.

The creative way in which you sought the School Council's view of what constitutes low-level behaviour and then working with staff and all students to determine a new behaviour policy and strategy for managing behaviour is paying dividends. Students' reported that teachers now have a consistent approach to managing any misbehaviour and as a result lessons are rarely disrupted. There are few behaviour incidents in the school and throughout the visit students' behaviour was good in lessons and when moving around the sprawling school site.

Leaders' speak convincingly about how they have been energised by their increased roles in monitoring and reviewing the work of the school and the way they are being held to account more robustly for their own work and that of their teams; particularly through the more rigorous performance management processes for staff and the regular student-progress meetings where students at risk of falling behind are checked carefully. All are involved in monitoring the quality of teaching through lesson observations and in checking students' progress following half termly assessments of their work. However, more work is needed to ensure leaders'

reviews of teaching always reports on the difference teaching is making to students' progress in lessons and over time; particularly for the more and least able.

Your demand for a more consistent approach to teachers' use of the school's marking policy has resulted in improvements to the way in which teachers provide feedback to students about their work. Students' are now generally provided with good advice about how to improve their work and the steps they need to take to progress to the next level. While leaders' review the effectiveness of feedback in students' books regularly, opportunities are missed to ensure they check the progress students are making at the same time. From our visits to classrooms it was clear that more needs to be done to challenge some teachers on the productivity of a few students in lessons, to ensure they always make good progress.

The IEB has quickly developed their skills in challenging as well as supporting you and senior leaders in driving the required improvements in the school. They now receive a broader range of information about the impact of the work of the school; through for example regular departmental reviews, reviews of learning from the Director of Education and detailed scrutiny of the Department for Education and Ofsted's performance data of the school.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The Director of Education for Northumberland provides regular, effective challenge and support to you and your leadership team. He carries out reviews of learning in lessons and has recently brokered support from the local outstanding teaching school, Cramlington Village. He has also conducted training for the IEB in reviewing the performance of the school. You report that the work is valued and is helping you to develop your leadership role in school and the capacity of the board to challenge you and make sure the desired improvement happens quickly.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's and Adults Services for Northumberland and as below.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector