

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: jbennett@cfbt.com

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

Dear Mrs Hush

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Norham High School

Following my visit with Michael Reeves, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 11 June, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is at least good, by:
 - giving students high quality feedback on how to improve their work and ensuring they act on teachers' advice
 - giving students work which is challenging and is neither too easy nor too difficult for them
 - ensuring teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve
 - sharing best practice in teachers' questioning skills, so that all teachers question effectively in order to encourage students to develop their oral responses
 - equipping students with the skills needed to achieve success in tests and examinations.

- Raise attainment and accelerate students' progress, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - giving students more opportunities to use their numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - ensuring pupil premium funding is used effectively to raise the attainment of disadvantaged students in mathematics and narrowing the achievement gap between them, their classmates and non-disadvantaged students nationally
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality, quantity and standard of presentation of work in students' books
 - ensuring any gaps in students' knowledge are identified and filled quickly.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the roles of middle leaders in monitoring the work of their areas of responsibility accurately
 - improving procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, by checking more carefully the quality of students' work over time.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 11 June 2015

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) met with the headteacher, a group of students, a range of staff (including middle leaders), a group of governors (including the Chair of the Governing Body) and an officer from North Tyneside local authority. HMI visited a range of lessons and scrutinised students' workbooks and folders. HMI also scrutinised documents, including the school's development plans, the single central record and related safeguarding and bullying logs and documents, and the school's records of the quality of teaching. A recent review of the school, undertaken by officers of North Tyneside local authority, was also scrutinised.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

- The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation because senior leaders and governors are not acting promptly in order to tackle the school's serious weaknesses. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not consistently high enough and leaders are not tackling this effectively.
- Senior leaders and, increasingly, middle leaders, are aware of what needs to be done and have drawn up plans. However, they have been too slow to implement and then assess the impact of their actions.
- The local authority has provided extensive support for senior and middle leaders at the school in key subject areas such as English, mathematics and science. Whilst this support is beginning to have a positive impact in both English and mathematics, there are still weaknesses in science.
- Senior and middle leaders are not monitoring the work of staff consistently and carefully enough. Students' work is untidy and presentation is poor in too many of the work books seen. There are examples of marking with students responding positively and with enthusiasm to teachers' comments. However, too often feedback appears to be having little impact and, as a result, students do not always make the progress that they should.
- Governors are aware of the weaknesses at the school. However, they do not yet have a clear enough view of how these shortcomings should be addressed. They are too distant from the school and over-reliant on information from senior leaders about the progress that is being made.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of teaching and assessment in mathematics is improving. New assessment procedures in Key Stage 4 are giving students clearer insights into their progress and what they need to do to improve. Students report that they welcome this and the way it helps them see the strengths and 'gaps' in their learning. There is evidence that the quality of presentation in mathematics is improving.

- There continues to be progress in English. Students report that they welcome the ways in which their use of 'red pen' in responding to teachers' marking shows them clearly how they have improved.
- There is evidence that the management of staff performance and associated professional development is more carefully linked by senior leaders to students' progress and attainment. However, it is too early to see the sustained impact of this.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders' and governors' approach to improving the school lacks urgency and coherence. As a result, efforts are piecemeal and the impact of actions are inconsistent.
- Middle leaders have received extensive support to develop their skills in monitoring the work of staff in their subject areas. However, despite their teams being relatively small, there is still too much variability in the quality of this monitoring and insufficiently prompt action taken when shortcomings are seen. For example, in humanities, despite some examples of effective marking in one subject area, in another there is little evidence that books had been marked at all.
- The teaching of spelling across the school still lacks coherence. Students do not have a clear enough idea about how to improve their spelling from the way their books are marked.

External support

The school is receiving extensive support from both the local authority and from a senior leader seconded into the school for two and half days a week. This support is beginning to have positive impact on aspects of the school's work. However, progress is too slow and leaders' plans about how they will continue to drive the school forward once this external support is removed are unclear.