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30 December 2015

Mrs Wendy Heslop  
Headteacher  
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Highburn  
Northumberland  
NE23 6BN

Dear Mrs Heslop

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Cramlington Learning Village**

Following my visit to your school with Michael Reeves, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Fiona Dixon, Ofsted Inspector, on 9–10 December 2015, 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 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 April 2015.

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

**Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2015**

- Urgently and significantly improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels, including governance, in order to ensure that students are kept safe, and that the quality of teaching, students' behaviour and their achievement rapidly improves and are all consistently good by:
  - ensuring that students in the main school are well supervised outside of lessons, are required to follow clear guidance regarding areas which are out of bounds and unsuitable and unsafe for them to be in and always conduct themselves safely around school
  - establishing a precise view of the school's work that forms the basis for bringing about the required improvements in the quality of teaching, students' achievement, behaviour in classrooms and across the school
  - using the pupil premium funding effectively to quickly improve the achievement of those students it is intended to support
  - improving the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs by improving the quality of teaching, including the support from learning support assistants, and improving the behaviour of other students in their classes, particularly lower-ability students
  - robustly supporting and challenging the work of subject leaders in overcoming the impact of weak teaching over time on students' achievement, particularly in mathematics
  - developing the skills of governors so that they hold senior leaders rigorously to account for students' achievement, behaviour and safety and the quality of the teaching they receive.
- Take action to improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and supports all students to make good or better progress, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that teachers take into account the varying needs and abilities of students to set work that is well matched to their capabilities and which is appropriately challenging
  - making sure that all students are engaged well in their learning, are required to answer challenging questions and to show their understanding of what they are taught
  - establishing greater consistency in the marking of students' work so that they receive and act upon guidance which is of a high quality across all subjects

- making sure that teachers' expectations of students' achievement are consistently high and that they insist all students' work is completed and presented well
- consistently developing students' extended writing skills and their ability to confidently use mathematics across all the subjects they study.
- Urgently improve students' behaviour by:
  - making sure all staff deal consistently and effectively with poor behaviour within lessons
  - ensuring that students are required to concentrate well in lessons, and to contribute and participate in the learning they need to make
  - requiring students to wear the correct uniform, and to engender their pride in wearing it
  - ensuring that standards and expectations of students' behaviour around school are consistently high.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 9–10 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team and a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. As well as observing and talking with pupils around the school, inspectors also had more formal meetings with four groups of pupils to discuss their views on the school and learning. Inspectors also met with a group of newly qualified teachers and with a group of subject leaders.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the school has stopped offering support to other schools. Also, leaders have made significant changes to the leadership of certain subject areas. These include the leadership of mathematics and that of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

- Provision in the sixth form continues to be effective and outcomes are good.
- The 2015 GCSE results were an improvement on 2014 and brought overall results back to 2013 levels. However, this group of Year 11 pupils should have done better because they entered the school in Year 7 with Key Stage 2 results that were, overall, above average.
- The school's predictions of the grades that pupils would attain at GCSE in 2015 were inaccurate and overgenerous.
- There was significant variation in pupils' outcomes in GCSE across the range of subjects. Outcomes at GCSE for English, for example, were better than they were in mathematics.
- For disadvantaged pupils, GCSE results in 2015 showed a significant decline on the previous year. The 'gap' in attainment between these pupils and others in the school was 40%.
- Across all years, pupils with special educational needs are not making the progress that they should. However, inspection evidence and information recently gathered by the school suggest that the outcomes for special educational needs pupils are beginning to improve. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) will examine the progress of these pupils carefully during his next inspection visit.

- Overall, evidence from this inspection shows that higher expectations by teachers and more rigorous monitoring by leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. However, it is too early to say whether these improvements are rapid and sustained enough to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make the progress that they should.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

- A whole-school marking policy is now in place and is, generally, followed by staff. Pupils welcome this and the ways in which it helps them understand what they need to do to improve their work. However, not all teachers are checking that pupils are following up on the comments that teachers are making about pupils' work. This means that misconceptions are not always being corrected.
- Leaders are now gathering information about pupils' progress and outcomes six times a year. Although it is early days, there are signs that this is having a positive impact on individual pupils' progress and understanding. Teachers are beginning to use this regularly collected information to focus their teaching more carefully. This is, according to the school's own information and supported by inspection evidence, resulting in more effective teaching focused on pupils' needs.
- Examples of effective questioning of pupils by teachers were seen during the inspection. These teachers extended pupils' understanding and challenged their assumptions by focusing on the 'why' and the 'how' rather than the more mundane 'what' in their questions. Pupils report that they enjoy, and are stimulated by, teaching that challenges in this way.
- Inspection evidence shows that where teachers' and other staff's expectations are high, pupils make surer progress. In a lower-ability Key Stage 3 English lesson, for example, the teacher's high expectations over time have had a very positive impact on these pupils' progress. Their books are generally well presented and show examples of writing at length that is increasingly accurate and assured.
- The recently introduced school-wide 'gold standard' approach to presentation is being followed in almost all areas of the school. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the presentation of pupils' work. Although presentation is improving, examples of poor or underdeveloped handwriting were seen during the inspection. Too often this was going unchallenged by teachers. In addition, it is not clear how the way that spelling is marked is helping pupils learn how to spell. Examples were seen during the inspection where pupils were copying out corrected spellings incorrectly. This was not always spotted by teachers and, as a result, went unchallenged.

- Pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, are not being given enough opportunities to write at length. This means that they are not always extending their understanding and skills through lengthier exploration of ideas and concepts. Although improving, too often not enough is being done to ensure that pupils make up the work they miss as a result of absence from school. This is notably the case with some pupils with special educational needs, whose attendance, as a whole, is lower than that of other pupils at the school.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

- Pupils report that they welcome the recently launched more rigorous approach to behaviour as set out, for example, in the 'Cramlington 10' set of expectations. They say it is having a positive impact on their learning and feelings of well-being both in and out of the classroom. Almost all pupils spoken with understand and concur with the 'no excuses' approach to uniform, and see this as a sign of a 'good' school where 'boundaries' are clear. Inspectors saw no examples of pupils flouting the uniform code during the inspection.
- There are effective systems in place at the school to support pupils whose behaviour is challenging. The school's records show that the number of pupils who are excluded from the school for a fixed period of time is low. The school's provision for internal exclusion is effective. Appropriate work is set for those who are sent to this provision (The Base) and careful records of those who attend are used to help these pupils improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Pupils report that they are aware of the different forms that bullying can take and that it is very rare at the school. If they are uncertain or unhappy, they report that there are well-developed systems in place to support them. They have confidence that any issues would be addressed by adults at the school promptly and well.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. There are regular 'well-being days' where issues such as safety and health are discussed and explored. Pupils say that they enjoy these days and that they are well run and interesting.
- The site is carefully and effectively supervised at the start and end of the day and at break times by highly visible and vigilant staff. Pupils move around the campus with appropriate care and concern for others. Levels of litter are very low. Inspectors saw no examples of unruly or boisterous behaviour during the inspection.

- Overall, levels of attendance at the school are good. Those of disadvantaged pupils, with the exception of Year 9, are improving as a result of the school's targeted actions. According to information provided by the school, Year 9 has higher levels of examples of poor behaviour than other years. HMI will examine this further during his next inspection visit.
- The school communicates effectively with parents. For example, leaders held an open evening to discuss the recent inspection and its outcomes, and the actions the school is taking. Both the Ofsted website (Parent View) and the school's own surveys of parents show that, on the whole, parents support the work of the school.
- The health and safety issues identified in the previous inspection have been effectively addressed.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

- Leaders and governors acknowledge the school's weaknesses and are addressing them with vigour. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school, as a result of leaders' actions, is much improved. Weaknesses in the quality, consistency and impact of teaching are being addressed through carefully planned and implemented actions. Although inspection evidence shows that there are signs of improvement, it is too early to say yet that these improvements are sustained.
- Governors have reviewed and examined their purpose and roles so that they are now more able to challenge leaders' work at the school. They have refocused their committee structure and undergone extensive training. They are now more able to develop a precise and accurate view of the school and hold leaders to account.
- Governors acknowledge that they have not acted effectively in the past to close the gaps in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the school. They are now working closely with the senior team to address this through, for example, establishing 'portfolio' roles for governors. This involves small groups of governors focusing closely and with increasing expertise on particular aspects of the school's work so that they can be detailed and accurate in their assessment of the impact of this work.
- Leaders at the school have taken urgent steps to address the weaknesses in the leadership of some subjects and areas of the school. Leaders of some departments have left their posts. Members of the senior leadership team, supported by governors, are now closely linked to and responsible for certain subject areas such as mathematics. It is too early to assess whether this is having a sustained and positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Leaders have established a new leadership role at the school to drive up standards and opportunities for disadvantaged pupils and to lead the school in closing the

gap between the outcomes for these pupils and others at the school. The progress of this aspect of the school's work will be a priority for HMI during his next inspection visit.

- The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities has been restructured. It is now overseen by a member of the senior leadership team. Leaders acknowledge that in the past this aspect of the school's work has focused too much on pupils' welfare rather than their academic progress. The school is confident that the new leadership structure, which includes the closer monitoring of the impact of the work of teaching assistants, will improve outcomes for these pupils. HMI will examine this carefully at his next inspection visit.
- The school has developed effective plans to address the school's weaknesses. These plans identify and address key issues and set out how they will be addressed. However, the plans do not clearly separate out who is leading on an aspect of work, who is checking that the work is being undertaken in a timely fashion and who is assessing its impact on pupils' learning and well-being.

### **External support**

Cardinal Hume Catholic School, an outstanding school, provides effective support to the school through, for example, a recent review of behaviour. In addition, The King Edward VI School, an outstanding local school, is providing effective support for newly and recently qualified teachers at the Cramlington Learning Village.