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Mrs Wendy Heslop  
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Dear Mrs Heslop

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

Following my visit with Anne Vernon and Fiona Dixon, Ofsted Inspectors, to your academy on 9 and 10 March 2016, 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 that have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Regional Schools Commissioner 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 that 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, and 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 second monitoring inspection on 9 March 2016 to 10 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited lessons, and scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher and members of her senior team, a range of middle leaders, groups of pupils and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with the school's improvement partner on the telephone. The lead inspector also analysed parents' views of the school as expressed on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, a member of the senior leadership team has taken on the oversight of the leadership of mathematics and another member of the senior leadership team has taken on the support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

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

- Leaders and governors are clear about the school's weaknesses and are driving improvement. For the most part, expectations by staff of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave are improving. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school continues to improve as a result of leaders' and staff's sustained efforts. As a result, pupils are more engaged and excited about their learning.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. Learners make effective progress, are well supported and are advised about next steps.
- The restructuring of the leadership of the provision for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs has resulted in a more careful focus on the needs of these pupils. Staff are clearer and have more ambitious expectations of what these pupils can do and achieve. As one member of staff commented, 'We are now all teachers of special educational needs.' Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) will monitor the continued impact of this during his next visit.
- In the main, weaknesses in the quality, consistency and impact of teaching continue to be addressed. However, inspection evidence shows that the ways leaders are monitoring the impact of teaching lacks precision. When leaders observe teaching, there is not enough clear emphasis on which aspects of the teaching are having a direct and positive impact on pupils' progress and joy in learning. As a result, opportunities can be lost in follow-up discussions with staff to improve the quality of their work.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching are more evident in Key Stage 4

than in Key Stage 3, where examples of weaker teaching were seen. Leaders at the school share this view and acknowledge that more emphasis has been placed on ensuring success in Key Stage 4 than in the earlier years of the school.

- Leaders acknowledge that there has been a history of inaccurate prediction of GCSE results at the school. They have sought support from successful schools as part of a strategy to help ensure that predictions for the 2016 external examination results are accurate. Senior leaders have also bolstered and improved the leadership of some subjects, notably mathematics, to improve accountability and to extend expertise. Middle leaders report that they welcome this support and are confident that predictions and expectations for the summer 2016 examinations are accurate and that results will be better than in 2015. Although inspection evidence shows that there are now more rigorous systems in place to help ensure the accuracy of predictions, it is too early to say whether this will be borne out by results later this year.
- Governors have continued to refine their skills and act effectively to address historical shortcomings at the school. The recently introduced 'portfolio' roles (where pairs of governors are linked to subjects and areas of the school) has resulted in governors having an increasingly clear sense of what needs to be done. This has increased their knowledge, improved their skills and raised their expectations. They are more able to hold leaders to account for their work.
- Governors report that they have confidence that the senior leadership team has the skills to lead the school out of special measures within the required time.
- Although adequate, leaders' and governors' plans continue to lack precision. In these plans, actions are often too general and it is not clear how the impact of the actions taken will be measured and by whom. Similarly, the plans lack clear milestones which would enable more accurate judgements to be made about how far the school is along the road to success.
- Leaders at the school are increasingly effective in their engagement with parents. As well as a range of questionnaires, evidence from the school suggests that attendance at parents' evenings and information events is high.

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

- Teaching is improving at the school because teachers and other staff are taking fuller account of the needs and abilities of their pupils, and are increasingly setting work matched to their capabilities. A range of strategies by senior and middle leaders has contributed to this improvement.
- The more regular, six-weekly gathering of information about pupils' progress is beginning to have a positive effect on the consistency of teaching at the

school. This is because progress information is helping leaders and staff see what all pupils and groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged, need to do next to improve. HMI will monitor the continued impact of this aspect of the school's work during his next visit.

- The whole-school marking policy continues to take root and is followed by staff. However, examples were seen in books where misconceptions of key ideas went unchallenged because staff had not checked that pupils had made the corrections asked of them. This was particularly the case where the presentation in books was weaker.
- External support in the scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and folders as well as regular 'work trawls' by middle and senior leaders are improving the consistency of teachers' marking and the conclusions they draw about the impact of their teaching. However, links between the conclusions from leaders' observation of lessons and their scrutiny of pupils' work are not always drawn out clearly enough to help teachers improve their practice.
- Examples were seen during the inspection of high-quality questioning by teachers of pupils and by pupils of each other. This was particularly the case where teachers' expectations were high and pupils were able, through challenging questioning, to explore complex ideas. In a lower ability English lesson, for example, the teacher had created and sustained an atmosphere of exploration and enquiry where pupils were relaxed, eager and engaged. As a discussion session was coming to a close, one pupil asked, 'Can I just say something', and went on to make a shrewd contribution to the closing discussion. Other pupils and the teacher listened with interest and engagement.
- Pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 3 and the most able, are not being given enough opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English, although this is improving. Not enough is expected of them and they are not extending their understanding, skills and stamina by writing at length and developing their ideas and delight in writing.
- The whole-school 'gold standard' approach to presentation continues to have a positive effect on pupils' work and their pride and pleasure in it.

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

- Pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and before and after school is considerate and calm. Pupils are well supervised by highly visible, caring and attentive members of staff. In lessons, pupils are polite and, where they have the opportunities, actively engaged and enthusiastic in and about their learning. The 'Cramlington 10' approach continues to have a positive impact. Pupils report that they continue to welcome it and see its worth.
- Pupils say that they feel and are safe in school. They know the risks of the internet and how to minimise them. They know about the different forms that bullying can take and are confident that, if it should occur, it would be

dealt with promptly and effectively by staff.

- The school's work to keep challenging pupils in school is effective: exclusions from school are rare. The Base (the on-site provision for pupils who, from time to time, display challenging behaviour) is well led and pupils make effective progress in their learning while they are there. They report that this provision supports and challenges them to improve their behaviour. Senior leaders monitor its use carefully.
- Pupils report that they have noticed, and welcome, a more open and positive attitude at the school. They say that they welcome the regular 'well-being days', where the whole school explores particular issues associated with personal development, health and safety. They say that during these days and across the school generally there are more opportunities for discussion and exploration of issues such as sexuality and the diversity of our society.
- Sixth form learners report that the advice and guidance that the school offers them about their learning, well-being and next steps is of a very high standard. They particularly mentioned the ways in which staff at the school 'go the extra mile' to help and advise them.
- Sixth formers welcome the opportunities they get to act as mentors and supporters of younger pupils during activities such as 'Challenge Wednesday'.
- Attendance at the school is above the national averages, and improving for disadvantaged pupils as a result of actions by leaders. The attendance of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is improving rapidly.
- At the previous inspection, school records showed that there were more examples of poor behaviour in Year 9 than in other years. Robust action from the year leader and the further strengthening of the whole-school emphasis on creating and maintaining a climate for learning has led to significant improvements in behaviour and attitudes in this year group.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

- There have been no external examination results since the previous monitoring inspection.
- Inspection evidence and the school's own information shows an improving but still variable picture of pupils' progress across Key Stage 3. The progress of disadvantaged pupils, although improving across this key stage, is still not as rapid as it should be.
- Based on the school's own information, results at GCSE in the summer of 2016 are predicted to be a marked improvement on previous years. Although, according to school information, there will still be a gap between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and others, this gap is beginning to close.
- Leaders are confident in their predictions for the 2016 examination results because they have introduced externally validated monitoring systems that identify the needs of pupils and gaps in teaching. They have used this

information to improve teaching and to ensure that there is targeted support for pupils. Inspection evidence shows that these systems are in place and are having an impact. It is too early to say whether they will have the full impact that leaders expect.

- The school's own information, borne out by inspection evidence, shows that outcomes in Key Stage 4 for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are improving. Improvements for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in Key Stage 3 are less certain.
- Outcomes for sixth form learners continue to be strong. The school's information and inspection evidence shows that learners make effective progress and are on track to realise the next steps in their education, training or employment.

### **External support**

- Since September 2015, the headteacher of Cardinal Hume Catholic School, who is a national leader of education, has visited the school on a very regular basis. He has helped the senior leadership team to improve the quality of its work through shared observation of teaching. Mathematics staff from Cardinal Hume Catholic School have also supported and improved the effectiveness of the mathematics department at Cramlington, particularly in assessment and the accuracy of predictions of how well Cramlington pupils will do in external examinations. Cardinal Hume staff have done this through regular training, shared observation and assessment of pupils' work.
- The headteacher of King Edward VI School, who is a national leader of education, has also supported the school on a regular basis. He and his staff have done this through regular lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. Staff from this local, outstanding school have also helped staff at Cramlington to check the predicted grades of Year 11 GCSE science pupils.
- Staff from Outwood Academy have supported staff at Cramlington to verify their judgements about the quality of pupils' work, particularly in English, as they prepare for this summer's GCSE examinations.
- Consultants sourced through Northumberland local authority visit the school regularly to check progress. They have had a particular focus on improving the quality of the provision for those at the school eligible for pupil premium funding. They have done this by helping both senior and other staff at the school to assess the impact of the actions they have taken to improve pupils' work.
- The full impact of this external support, especially that associated with improving the accuracy of leaders' predictions of pupils' performance in their GCSE examinations, will only become clear later this year.