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6 October 2016

Mrs Wendy Heslop
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Dear Mrs Heslop

Special measures monitoring inspection of Cramlington Learning Village

Following my visit with Susan Hayter, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Paul Welford, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20–21 September 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school 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.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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, 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 third monitoring inspection on 20–21 September 2016

Evidence

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

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been changes to the timing of the school day and a new leader for mathematics has taken up post.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

- Leaders and governors have high expectations and are continuing to drive improvement at the school. They are very clear about the school's weaknesses and are focused on ensuring that improvement is rapid and sustained for all pupils.
- The leadership of the sixth form continues to be strong. This is because the leader has high expectations and is always looking for effective ways to improve the quality of sixth formers' experience and opportunities.
- The increasingly effective leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability has led to an improvement in these pupils' progress and attainment. Staff across the school are now more aware of these pupils' individual skills and needs and are increasingly successful in ensuring that they achieve as they should. This is because leaders have raised the profile of special educational needs and disabilities across the school; staff are increasingly well supported and carefully trained.
- Leaders' insistence on good behaviour continues to ensure that the atmosphere around the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are, generally, well behaved and eager to learn. This is especially the case where lessons are engaging and expectations high. In these lessons pupils take real pleasure in their learning and work well together, developing behaviour that helps them to grow as self-reliant yet co-operative learners.
- The leadership of mathematics continues to strengthen. This area of the curriculum has been effectively overseen by a member of the senior leadership. This has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching. The recent appointment of a head of mathematics and an increase in the amount of teaching time has added further to this department's capacity to improve.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching is increasingly effective because it is focused on assessing the impact of teaching on pupils and on ensuring that staff teach what pupils need to develop and improve. This is

particularly the case in key stage 4, where there is evidence that leaders' monitoring is improving teaching and having a very positive impact on pupils' outcomes. In key stage 3 the impact of this monitoring is less certain. Too often the work that pupils are given is not demanding enough and does not take sufficient account of what they already know and can do. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils in key stage 3.

- Leaders and governors are developing strategies to address the weaker provision in key stage 3. Part of their planning is to ensure that staff take greater account of pupils' experience in primary school. This work is still in its early stages but subject leaders have already begun to forge subject links with their colleagues at local primary schools. It is too early to assess the impact of this work.
- Leaders at the school have provided effective support for the group of newly qualified teachers who have been appointed since the previous inspection, This has included careful induction into the life of the school, focused support as these colleagues begin their careers and very detailed training in the procedures that ensure that pupils are safe.
- Leaders' plans to improve the school are extensive and detailed. However, it is still not sufficiently clear how the impact of actions will be measured, by whom and by when. Additionally, some of the successes outlined in the plans are not clearly evident in the reality of the school.
- Governance continues to be a strength at the school. Governors are ambitious, realistic and imaginative in the ways they hold leaders to account for the success of all pupils at the school. The 'portfolio' roles, where governors are linked to particular aspects of the school, are now well established. These roles are part of the range of strategies that governors have developed to ensure that they have a detailed understanding of how well the school is doing. This means that they can act swiftly to ensure that improvement takes place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching at the school continues to improve. This is because staff, particularly in key stage 4 and the sixth form, are monitoring pupils' and students' progress more carefully. They are then using the information they gather to inform and focus their teaching. Senior and subject leaders are supporting staff in this work through regular meetings about pupils' progress and targeted support and training.
- The teaching in key stage 3 is still not as consistently effective as it should be. There is too much variation in the quality of teaching across the curriculum. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. Inspection evidence shows that these pupils have to wait for others to catch up before moving on. As a result, valuable learning time is wasted and pupils are not getting the 'stretch' that they need.
- The whole-school approach to marking and assessment is followed by all staff. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are being given opportunities to

respond to teachers' comments in their books and folders. However, in too many of the books seen, pupils' responses were either superficial or incomplete.

- Pupils' books and folders across the school are, generally, well presented. The 'gold standard' presentation rules are followed. Pupils take pride in their work and are able to discuss what they have been learning with enthusiasm.
- Teachers are increasingly effective in their use of questioning to challenge and develop pupils' ideas, knowledge and skills. This is particularly the case where staff have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. For example, in a Year 10 physical education (PE) lesson, the teacher used targeted questions combined with deft use of video to reinforce skills in table tennis. He drew on the practical learning the pupils had just experienced as they practised serving and set it in the broader context of an intellectual approach to the game.
- Pupils are still not being given sufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils in key stage 3. As a result, pupils do not have sufficient chance to practise and extend their skills in describing, explaining, evaluating and making judgements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- Behaviour at the school continues to improve. Pupils are considerate and thoughtful in class and as they move around the school. The school encourages them to think about their responsibilities to themselves and to each other. They wear their uniform smartly.
- Pupils and students, including in the sixth form, are safe and say that they know how to stay safe at school and beyond, including when online. This is because the school's systems are clear and effective. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to discuss matters of safety and well-being.
- Pupils are very aware of the different forms that bullying can take. They are very clear about what they should do if they or a friend was unhappy or afraid. They are confident that staff at the school would deal with any issues promptly and effectively.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning through effective and imaginatively taught guidance. This is provided through regular 'well-being' days and other activities, often involving outside speakers. On these occasions, pupils have opportunities to explore next steps and the many aspects of life in modern Britain.
- The work that the school does to advise and guide sixth-form students in their next steps is particularly strong. Students report that they find staff helpful, challenging and indefatigable in the support that they give them. As a result, almost all sixth formers move on to their chosen next steps. The school keeps careful records of sixth formers' destinations.
- The work that the school does to ensure the safety and progress of those pupils who are on the school roll yet taught and cared for off the school site

are effective. Leaders have robust systems in place which are very regularly checked.

- Attendance at the school is above the national average. Leaders at the school work effectively on an individual basis to support and challenge pupils and their families who, for one reason or another, find regular attendance difficult.

Outcomes for pupils

- In the sixth form the results of external examinations taken in the summer were strong, particularly at A level. This meant that most students were able to take their chosen next steps in education, training or employment. The school has detailed information about almost all of these students' destinations.
- The results for those in the sixth form who were resitting their GCSE in order to achieve a good grade in English were strong. This was not the case for results in mathematics where results were weaker.
- The results for year 11 pupils taking GCSE examinations in the summer were a significant improvement on previous years. The accuracy of the school's own predictions of the grades that pupils would attain at GCSE improved significantly. The predictions were inaccurate for only a small number of subjects. Leaders have acted promptly to improve the accuracy of prediction and outcomes for these subjects for next year. Leaders are also clear that this improvement in outcomes at the end of key stage 4 must be sustained and continue to improve for all subjects in the future.
- The difference in attainment at GCSE between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, compared to validated 2015 results, while still too large, has narrowed significantly. Leaders and governors are very aware that more work needs to be done to narrow this difference.
- GCSE results for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities also improved substantially. This is because staff were much more aware of the needs of these pupils and worked precisely to ensure that specific barriers to success, wherever possible, were tackled and, often, overcome.
- Overall outcomes in key stage 3 are not good enough. This is because leaders at the school have only recently focused on improving standards in this area. Staff still do not take sufficient account of what pupils already know and can do. As a result the pace of learning is often too slow and unstimulating. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. More account must be taken of what Year 7 pupils have learned and achieved in key stage 2 so that they make a flying start in Cramlington Learning Village.
- Reading is encouraged through a shared, school-wide approach. However, the scheme is not rigorous enough. Inspection evidence shows that most-able readers are not being given access to books that will challenge them and encourage them to read widely. Similarly, less-able readers are not encouraged to use the skills they learned in primary school to 'decode' new words when they come across them.

External support

- Leaders and governors at the school have reduced the amount of external support they receive as the school's expertise and capacity has grown.
- The support the school received from Outwood Academy and from King Edward VI School to help assure the accuracy of its predictions at GCSE has been very effective. This is borne out by this year's external examination results.
- The school has received effective support from Cardinal Hume Catholic School to help improve the quality of mathematics teaching and the accuracy of that department's assessments. Cardinal Hume Catholic School is supporting the school in improving the quality of its key stage 3 provision. It is too early to assess the impact of this support.
- The school has recently appointed a new external adviser to support and challenge its continued improvement. It is too early to assess the impact of this colleague's work.