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Mr Kieran McGrane
Headteacher
Bedlingtonshire Community High School
Palace Road
Bedlington
Northumberland
NE22 7DS

Dear Mr McGrane

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 June 2010, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

Since the inspection, the federated middle school has moved to the high school site. Nearly half the teachers have left and been replaced, four new heads of department are in post, and advanced skills teachers have been appointed in English, mathematics and science.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 July 2008, the school was asked to raise standards and achievement, reduce variations in performance between subjects, eliminate inadequate teaching, increase the proportion of good teaching and develop the practice of subject and year leaders to ensure consistently good leadership and management at all levels.

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

- good progress in making improvements

and

- good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students are achieving more highly, many from low starting points in Year 9. Attainment is rising following the 2009 GCSE results which fell short of challenging targets. School data indicate that targets for 2010 should be met and exceeded. For example, the number of students expected to gain GCSE A* to C grades is 79% and the target is 54%. The school is on track to meet the target for the number of pupils gaining higher grades including English and mathematics.

The variation in performance between subjects is improving and the school knows there is still some way to go. Achievement in English is higher than mathematics and the subjects not doing as well in 2009 were communication studies, design and technology, drama, French and history. Substantial and effective changes are being made to improve their overall performance.

The school is taking robust action to eliminate inadequate teaching. The proportion of good teaching has increased since the last inspection. All teachers attend professional development sessions every week and new performance management systems are working well. Senior leaders know there is more to be done before the quality of teaching is high enough to securely underpin achievement and attainment. Specialist status for mathematics and computing is helping to develop key skills and is making a positive impact on improving the school's performance. Information and communication technology targets are on track to be met and exceeded.

The quality of leadership and management by subject and year leaders has been strengthened. For example, subject leaders are held more closely to account through a series of individual department reviews and action is taken to remove any barriers to learning. Tracking of students' performance is more effective and underachievement is tackled well. Year leaders are taking appropriate action to improve attendance and the high number of exclusions has been significantly reduced since October 2009.

The local authority has been effective in helping drive school improvement. Senior leaders work closely with the School Improvement Partner to achieve gains in the school's overall effectiveness. They are making sure quality is consistently good at all levels of leadership. As a result, the school is demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector