

6 March 2015

Mr Mick Hill  
Headteacher  
Northallerton College  
Grammar School Lane  
Northallerton  
North Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Hill

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Northallerton College.**

Following my visit with Suzanne Lithgow Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 5 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning to bring about further improvement in the quality and impact of teaching across the curriculum.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and the Chair and other members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last monitoring inspection. A member of the senior leadership undertook lesson observations with the inspector and a meeting was held with a group of subject leaders. The local authority's school improvement link officer shadowed the inspection and undertook a learning walk and other inspection activities with the lead inspector. The published performance data for 2014 was reviewed.

## Context

Since the monitoring inspection in March 2014 the executive headteacher has made some changes of personnel and roles at middle and senior leadership levels. The school is set to amalgamate with one of the other schools in the federation from April 2015.

## Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have a much clearer view of how teaching quality is judged. Consequently they are realistic in their views of the overall quality of teaching in relation to its impact on pupils' achievement over time. In observations of mathematics teaching the inspector saw more strength in teachers' practice and greater engagement of students in learning than was the case a year ago. Subject leaders have observed teaching more widely in the college and in other schools and report that this is supporting their work to develop learning materials and teachers' practice. During a learning walk through science, undertaken by the inspector and the local authority link officer, some mediocre teaching and tired materials were seen that contrasted unfavourably with those seen in mathematics lessons.

It is crucial senior leaders responsible for teaching quality take action to develop the skills of all teachers and continue to build the capacity of the subject heads to lead improvements in their specialist areas. New systems to increase accountability of subject heads are clearly understood and supporting the direction of travel. Governors too, are offering greater challenge through questions that probe in exactly the right areas of the school's performance, for example about gaps between forecast and actual results and the reasons for 'disappointing' English results at Key Stage 4 in 2014.

It is crucial too, that improvements to teaching are demonstrated through greater impact on outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015. While pupils' progress in their best eight subjects improved in 2014, some challenges remain to be tackled. In 2014, six out of 10 pupils made expected progress in English, compared to the average figure of 7 out of 10 for secondary schools nationally. In mathematics 68% of pupils made expected progress compared to 65% nationally. Only a third of pupils eligible for free school meals made expected progress in English and half did so in mathematics. These outcomes for different groups and the variability in subject performance are the gaps that better teaching must seek to narrow. The senior leaders and governors are very clear about the priorities for improvement.

Improvements in the attendance of girls and pupils supported by pupil premium funding this year have moved the figures favourably in relation to the national picture.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

The local authority has provided practical support in brokering links between Northallerton College and other schools. School staff report that this is helping them gain a wider perspective and is bringing fresh ideas to development work. The local authority provides the capacity to offer an external and impartial evaluation of the impact of actions to improve teaching and essentially to be very clear where things are improving well or not fast enough.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Cathryn Kirby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**