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17 December 2018

Mr Chris Drew  
Principal  
Northallerton School & Sixth Form College  
Grammar School Lane  
Northallerton  
DL6 1DD

Dear Mr Drew

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Northallerton School & Sixth Form College**

Following my visit with Miss Alexandra Hook and Mr Paul Welford, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 4 and 5 December 2018, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2018.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint up to two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection, except to the mathematics department.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2018.**

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective by:
  - implementing a robust monitoring system to guarantee that all required checks on the suitability of staff meet Department for Education (DfE) requirements
  - making sure that all concerns about pupils' personal development, safety or welfare are followed up robustly, in a timely way and records of the actions taken are detailed and of high quality
  - making sure that governors have strong oversight of all aspects of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - governors support senior leaders and hold them to account for all aspects of the school's performance
  - leaders and governors act quickly and decisively to improve levels of attendance, pupils' conduct and behaviour, and their attitudes to learning
  - leaders and governors take urgent action to tackle the weaknesses and inconsistencies in the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment at all key stages, including 16 to 19 study programmes
  - performance management is used to drive improvement in teaching, accelerate disadvantaged pupils' progress and hold teachers and leaders to account
  - additional funding, especially the pupil premium, is used effectively and the impact of this funding on outcomes for pupils is closely monitored by senior leaders
  - all aspects of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are promoted consistently well.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at all key stages and increase the progress pupils make, especially disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan learning activities which are interesting, engaging and closely matched to pupils' needs and starting points
  - assess pupils' learning and progress accurately and use assessment information to accelerate the progress pupils make.

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 pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 December 2018 to 5 December 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised school documents, including safeguarding records, behaviour and attendance information and information around the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors met with the principal, vice-principal, members of the senior leadership team and members of the interim executive board, including the chair. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors spoke with middle leaders, a wide range of staff and pupils from Year 7 to Year 13. They observed teaching across a range of subjects. Some of these visits to classrooms were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised work in pupils' books jointly with senior leaders and talked informally with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes. Inspectors also took into account the 305 parent and carer responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been a significant number of changes to staffing. An interim executive principal and interim associate principal were appointed in January 2018. The governing body was disbanded straight after the last inspection and was replaced with an interim executive board (IEB). A new attendance officer was appointed in February 2018. Twenty staff have left the school since the last inspection, including senior and middle leaders and leaders responsible for safeguarding. A new experienced designated safeguarding leader and deputy safeguarding leader have been assigned to oversee safeguarding arrangements in the school. Governors appointed a new substantive principal, vice-principal and two assistant principals, who all joined the school in September 2018. Other senior leadership positions were reviewed and an assistant principal overseeing teaching and learning and a senior leader responsible for key stage 3 took up their new roles in September 2018. A new chair of the IEB was appointed in September 2018. The school is currently in the process of converting to become an academy.

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

Since the last inspection in January 2018, the interim executive principal and associate principal have made a positive start in tackling weaknesses identified in the previous report. They moved quickly to address safeguarding concerns and to produce an action plan that clearly identifies the improvements they want to see. They helped stabilise the school during some turbulent and challenging times.

In September 2018, the new principal, vice-principal and senior leaders maintained the momentum of the actions of the previous leadership team through a smooth

transition. The permanent appointment of the new principal promises much-needed stability, stronger consistency of leadership and management and more sustained direction and improvement. The new leadership team refined improvement plans further. As a result, there are clear signs that leaders are having a positive impact and are starting to bring about necessary improvements.

The principal and vice-principal have accurately assessed areas requiring immediate attention and put in place effective systems and procedures to address them. Leaders at all levels share their high ambitions for the school and its pupils and are committed to making the necessary changes. They have a realistic understanding of the scale of the task and the challenges they face. Their focus on improving behaviour, teaching and learning, and pupils' progress has already begun to have an impact. Staff work hard, are positive about the changes and are equally dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for the pupils at Northallerton School & Sixth Form College. Consequently, there is a shared aspiration for continual school improvement.

Safeguarding arrangements are now more effective and in line with legal requirements. Since January 2018, leaders have quickly put in place policies and procedures to ensure the rapid improvement of safeguarding arrangements. They have reviewed the checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school, and as a result information held is comprehensive. Staff have received up-to-date training, including on the 'Prevent' duty. They understand their responsibility to be vigilant in keeping pupils safe, know the signs to look out for and know how to share information in a timely and appropriate way. Pupils are given relevant information and guidance on how they can keep themselves safe both in school and online. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that early help is offered to pupils and their families as and when the need arises. Safeguarding concerns identified at the previous inspection have now been addressed.

Governance has undergone a significant overhaul. The local authority moved quickly to disband the previous school governing body and replaced it with an IEB. In September 2018, a new chair was appointed, who is also a national leader in governance. The members of this IEB are experienced, have a broad range of skills and expertise, including in education and safeguarding, and are committed to rapid and continual school improvement. They receive appropriate information from school leaders and provide appropriate challenge and scrutiny. Consequently, they know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and maintain a close monitoring of the school's progress and the impact of leaders' actions. Governance is an emerging strength of the school.

Leaders and governors introduced a new performance management policy in February 2018. Since September 2018, performance management objectives have been linked to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Regular accountability meetings between senior and middle leaders and regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning ensure that appropriate training and mentoring are provided to staff who need it. Leaders know exactly which departments require support and have appropriate action plans in place, which are monitored closely.

A new senior leader with an overview for disadvantaged pupils and the spending of associated funding was appointed in September 2018. Very recently, the school commissioned an external pupil premium review and received the draft report in November 2018. However, leaders and governors did not wait for the report to be published and started implementing most of the recommendations immediately. Governors monitor closely the spending of additional funding and the impact it is having on the education of disadvantaged pupils. The revised curriculum and a more coherent approach to teaching and learning indicate that leaders' actions are beginning to have some impact, especially in disadvantaged pupils' attendance at school. However, the progress disadvantaged pupils make from their different starting points is still not good enough.

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

Senior leaders have introduced clear expectations for both pupils and teachers and this is starting to have a positive impact. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to improve and is becoming more effective, although improvement is still needed in some areas.

Leaders have prioritised improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. They have implemented a systematic approach to teaching across all subject areas. Pupils are benefiting from more consistent routines and increasingly helpful feedback.

Leaders introduced 'Planning for Progress' in July 2018. Teachers are increasingly using pupil information when planning learning activities, which shows them the different needs of pupils in their classrooms, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders use the school's teaching and learning monitoring system to check the quality of teaching and learning and identify areas for further development. Consequently, leaders know that the quality of teaching across subjects is still variable and there are inconsistencies in the level of challenge provided to different groups of pupils and the management of behaviour of pupils in the classroom.

Leaders have raised expectations across the whole school. Most staff have high expectations for pupils and this is evident in most lessons and pupils' work in books. Most staff use the school's 'Aim Higher' system for aspiration and challenge well. Most pupils present their work well and respond to the guidance given by their teachers on how to improve their work further.

In September 2018, leaders merged the two school sites together and brought all pupils onto one site. The school day was restructured, introducing split breaks and lunchtimes, to allow for the increased number of pupils on site. During the monitoring visit, some pupils were observed wandering the corridors during the overlap of breaks. Pupils also reported that noise can sometimes disrupt learning for those still in lessons. Leaders are evaluating the impact of this new structure of the school day on the quality of teaching and learning.

The new leadership team introduced a revised curriculum, implementing it in key stage 3 initially. Middle leaders are contributing to the new curriculum through 'Leadership of Curriculum' meetings. A 'Learning for Life' programme was introduced in September 2018 to address pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff have received appropriate training in order to develop the skills required to support aspects of the new curriculum, including training for a number of sixth-form students in coaching younger pupils. Although this programme is beginning to embed, inconsistencies remain in the effectiveness of delivery across staff and across year groups.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have introduced a revised behaviour policy and raised expectations across the school. Staff have received appropriate training in managing behaviour. There is increased presence of staff and senior leaders around the school, including during breaks and lunchtimes. As a result, breaks and lunchtimes are generally calm and orderly, but there are still a few pupils who act inappropriately.

Pupils report that behaviour around the corridors and at breaktimes has improved, despite the increased number of pupils on site. Pupils also report that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns, including online. Inspection evidence confirms this. However, some parents still have concerns about the behaviour of pupils in the school.

Leaders analyse behaviour more thoroughly and data analysis is being used more effectively to target actions. For example, leaders have identified a group of pupils and are working hard to support them in improving their behaviour. Since the last inspection and following the raised expectations, the number of pupils who were permanently excluded increased significantly by the end of 2018. The number of fixed-term exclusions and repeat fixed-term exclusions is beginning to decrease but still remains too high.

Most pupils respond promptly to instructions and generally work well and cooperate with each other. However, in some lessons there was some shouting out and some poor attitudes to learning. Low-level disruption occurs more when work is not appropriate to challenge all pupils. Most teachers have built positive relationships with pupils. Despite all staff having received appropriate behaviour management training, some staff do not challenge inappropriate behaviour consistently. Leaders acknowledge that this remains an area for improvement for the school.

School leaders have raised the profile of the importance of good attendance. Through assemblies, form time and a range of rewards, pupils are well aware of the positive impact attendance can have on their progress. Leaders have refined and improved the ways in which they check the attendance of different groups of pupils.

The attendance team, recently strengthened by the appointment of an attendance officer, works hard with individual pupils and families to improve attendance. As a

result, overall attendance is beginning to improve, with some notable improvements in the attendance of pupils in Year 7, Year 9 and Year 10. However, attendance remains below national averages, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Punctuality is monitored closely by leaders and is an area of priority for the school. A significant number of pupils arrive late to school in the morning; a few pupils are wandering around the school corridors during the split breaks and lunchtimes and as a result they are late to some lessons.

The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school, despite some recent improvements, remains too high. School attendance information indicates a stronger improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils in Year 7, Year 9 and Year 10. Leaders maintain their focus and their efforts in continuing to improve the attendance of all pupils, including the disadvantaged.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Since the last inspection, and despite some very challenging and turbulent times for the school, leaders have ensured that the progress of all pupils remained in line with national averages. However, in 2018 the progress disadvantaged pupils made from their starting points was substantially lower than that of other pupils nationally. In 2018, the progress students made in the sixth form significantly improved on the previous two years and was above national averages.

In September 2018, leaders introduced a revised assessment and reporting system to ensure consistency across the school. Senior and middle leaders hold frequent progress monitoring meetings, scrutinise the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress and identify pupils who need additional support.

Senior leaders have embarked on conducting subject reviews to accurately assess the effectiveness of each department in school, including, so far, the mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and history departments. The improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. School assessment information and inspection evidence indicate an increasing improvement in the progress pupils make from their starting points, across year groups, including the disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders are not complacent and recognise that the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains an important priority. Leaders also recognise the need to improve the progress pupils make in mathematics, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils.

### **External support**

Since the last inspection, the local authority has been providing support to the school in a number of areas and is having a positive impact on the school's improvement. The school improvement adviser knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and, as a result, she provides effective challenge and support to the principal and his leadership team. The local authority has provided appropriate safeguarding training for staff and governors, supported governance

through the brokering of appropriate members for the IEB and arranged wider support for the school during recent challenging times for staff and pupils. The school works closely with the Arete Learning Trust in a number of areas, including collaborative senior leadership and subject team meetings and shared sixth-form provision with Stokesley School.