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Mrs M Williams
Sherburn High School
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Dear Mrs Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sherburn High School

Following my visit to your school with Anne Bowyer, Her Majesty's Inspector, on 15 October 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in April 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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

- equip middle leaders with the skills to make more regular and robust checks on teaching so that it improves at a faster rate
- ensure that teaching enables the less-able pupils to make faster progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, all members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers, and members of the governing body, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan, school self-evaluation, lesson observation records, governing body minutes, and

local authority notes were evaluated. Some of the subject leaders, on an individual basis, accompanied the inspector on visits to classrooms. During these visits, teaching and learning were briefly observed, workbooks were examined and pupils were questioned.

Context

Since the inspection in April 2015, a few members of staff have left and 15 new members of staff have joined the school, including eight teachers. There are four new governors.

Main findings

Governors, leaders and teachers are tackling the identified weaknesses with determination. The new goals for school improvement included in your action plan are aspirational and well supported by clear timescales for meeting specific objectives. Your expectations of leaders, teachers and pupils are high. You are keeping up with the challenging pace of actions you have detailed in the plan. The plan can be improved further by identifying progress targets for lower-attaining pupils in year groups other than Year 11. Additionally, the plan does not allocate responsibility for impact clearly enough to individuals. Arrangements for monitoring the impact of actions at key milestones need to be simplified so that focus on the priority areas for improvement is not lost.

Senior and middle leaders have worked collaboratively to set clear goals for school improvement. Senior leaders are holding middle leaders and teachers to account. Subject leaders are analysing assessment information more rigorously and beginning to use it more effectively to plan for the needs of underachieving groups and individuals. All leaders are checking on the progress being made in teaching and learning, particularly for the pupils with low prior attainment, boys and disadvantaged pupils. All leaders check that teachers are complying with the clear marking and feedback policy. However, leaders are not always making full use of the findings from this work. They identify next steps but do not systematically follow up. Subject leaders are not carrying out frequent enough checks of teaching and learning as a routine aspect of their role. As a result, teachers are not receiving prompt feedback and support to develop specific aspects of teaching and learning.

The impact of leaders' actions can be seen in the increasing engagement and involvement of boys and less-able pupils in learning. Where teaching is strongest, teachers are effective in challenging those pupils who are reluctant to engage in lessons, supporting them well and probing their understanding with skilful questioning that draws out fuller responses.

Teaching is improving. You rightly judge that teaching is not yet good because its quality still varies too much. Teachers' marking of less-able pupils' work is slowly improving. Some pupils could explain clearly how their responses to teachers'

feedback are deepening their knowledge and understanding. However, as with teaching, the quality of marking remains variable, with some weaker practice evident.

As well as addressing the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, you have focused on further improving behaviour, which was judged to be good at the last inspection. This initiative is having a positive impact on the engagement of lower-achieving boys.

The governing body is taking action to implement the recent recommendations of an external review requested from the local authority. Governing body minutes indicate a strengthening level of challenge and support. Governors are making regular visits to the school to join leaders in checking how well the school is doing. Governors are planning to question pupils and teachers more regularly to sharpen their understanding of pupils' work and the progress they are making.

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

External support

The local authority has continued to ensure you receive the mentoring support available for new headteachers. It has brokered helpful partnerships, and has contributed to the school improvement plan. However, the local authority does not have a clear enough view, six months after the last inspection, of the progress being made, because it is not checking carefully enough that actions taken are having the desired impact. The sixth form partnership with Tadcaster Grammar School is resulting in improved outcomes, including much better attendance, increased recruitment and an increase in the numbers of pupils carrying on with their studies beyond Year 12.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi

**Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted**