



Our Ref: JNO/kw

January 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

You may be aware that during 29 and 30 November 2016, an Ofsted inspection of Thomas Hepburn Academy was undertaken. The full report can be found on the Ofsted website.

The report recognises much of the good work that is taking place in the school and the level of support provided by the Northern Education Trust to tackle some of the areas where we most need to improve.

There is still a lot we need to do to ensure the standard of teaching and learning further improves and allows all our pupils to progress successfully. I can assure you that we are redoubling our efforts to achieve these improvements.

Here are some highlights from the report:

- The newly appointed Executive Principal and senior leaders know the school. They accurately and swiftly identify areas for improvement. Action planning is secure and they are rapidly overhauling strategies and implementing much improved systems to improve quality across all areas of the school.
- Almost all staff support the changes that are taking place and all staff believe that the school is well led and managed.
- The impact of the work of senior leaders and the support from the Trust are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning, the progress pupils are making and the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Leaders are delivering high quality training sessions to improve the quality of teaching at the school and there are early signs of impact on pupils' progress, for example in pupils' commitment to improving their work in some subjects such as English and science.
- Pastoral leaders know their pupils well. Using the new system for monitoring behaviour, leaders are able to intervene quickly to ensure that more pupils have the right support to improve their behaviour and remain in lessons.
- The majority of middle leaders have the skills to help teachers in their subject areas to improve the quality of teachingThe improvements are starting to be seen, particularly in English and science.
- Teachers are in full support of the changes the leadership team is making. Teachers feel that the school is well led and managed.
- The Trust took action to form an interim executive board and commissioned a review of the spending of additional funds, using expertise from across the Trust. The interim executive board, now has specific responsibilities related to its areas of expertise. Governors are linked to individual members of the senior leadership team in order to better hold them to account for their work.
- Working with the skilled Executive Principal, the governors have ensured that appropriate support is in place from across the Trust to quicken the pace in improving the school for example by providing support for leadership development.



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- Governors are closely monitoring the impact of support for middle leaders including the special educational needs coordinator role. They have brokered external support, for example in commissioning external reviews and a safeguarding audit. This is helping school leaders to evaluate the school's work and strengthening improvement planning.
- The Executive Principal is highly knowledgeable, experienced and skilled in safeguarding as is the designated lead for safeguarding.
- There is a culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff training is up to date and staff are able to explain confidently how they would deal with safeguarding issues.
- Pupils are safe at school and say they feel safe ... Pupils say that bullying is rare and they are confident that staff deal well with instances that do occur.
- Pupils say that since September 2016 they feel that their teachers are teaching them more and some teachers give them a greater variety of things to do which helps them to stay interested in their learning. This is evident in work in books in English.
- Pupils are taking more pride in their work and presentation is improving, as is their standard of uniform. This is due to teachers' higher expectations of what is required and is acceptable. Where uniform falls below expectations, staff are consistently tackling it.
- So far this year, disruptions to learning are less frequent than in the last academic year.
- Pupils say unreservedly that behaviour has improved since September 2016. They say that the 'whole school has changed completely' and that this is because 'leaders are stricter and have high expectations of us and for us.'
- They acknowledge there is still work to do but are pleased with the impact that the new school leaders are having on improving behaviour.

Northern Education Trust and the leadership of the academy, feel that the report is a fair reflection of the academy's progress to date.

The inspectors identified a number of areas for improvement to which Northern Education Trust and the leadership of the academy are actively responding. More information will be shared with parents regarding the actions being taken and how they can be involved with the developments planned.

In light of the inspection report, elements of the academy improvement plan have been further refined and developed in order to continue to strengthen the academy in all areas.

Yours faithfully

Ms J M Nolan
Executive Principal