



26<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

As you may be aware, the school had a section 5 Ofsted inspection on 30-31<sup>st</sup> January, 2018. We have now been advised by Ofsted that we can now share the report with parents and staff. The report can be accessed via a hyperlink in a notice on the front page of the school website, or via the hyperlink – <http://www.berwickacademy.co.uk/Data/Ofsted/BAORReportMarch18.pdf> In a few days, the report be available via Ofsted's site <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>. If you require a paper copy of the inspection report, please contact the school office, and they will post a copy to you.

After reading the report, you will see that the school was judged as inadequate. This has resulted in the school going into 'Special Measures'. This judgement has resulted in a number of key changes;

- A requirement to rapidly improve, with key indicators of improvement checked, through Ofsted monitoring visits on a half-termly basis. If improvements are in line with expectations, the school should expect to secure a 'Good' grading in 18-24 months. If improvements are not rapid enough, further interventions will be imposed, including the taking over of the school's governance and management by an external body and/or Academy chain;
- A need to work closely with, and guided by, the Department for Education (DfE), Ofsted, the Regional Schools Commission, and any other school improvement organisation that the DfE feels appropriate;
- A change in the leadership of the school. As you know, Alexis Widdowson recently left Berwick Academy and I have been asked to stand in as Acting Headteacher whilst a permanent replacement is found to take the school forward;
- We are not able to employ Newly Qualified Teachers.

We want the school to be a focus of local pride, a place that equips our young people to enrich their community and a place that Berwick deserves. A school that ultimately helps to attract people to the area. Clearly, this judgement means that this is not currently the case. This must be seen as a watershed moment and a new beginning.

We see this as an opportunity to re-engage with our students, parents, teachers, the community, and external experts in a constructive and honest dialogue. What is not in question is the commitment to improve for all, moving forward. There must be rapid changes, and this will challenge students, parents, and teachers. If we are successful, and we must be, because the education of our children is the most important responsibility, then it will be because we began to speak with one voice and our students feel both challenged and supported by us all.



Please be assured that the day-to-day running of the school continues as normal. However a number of changes have been made as a matter of urgency over the last term. These address issues that the school was already aware of or/and issues raised by the recent inspection report. In the last 3 weeks since the change to leadership, we have taken the following actions;

### **Safeguarding**

- Reviewed safeguarding (carried out by experts) endorsing planned changes to safeguarding procedures;
- Met with Northumbria Police regarding anti-social behaviour outside of school;
- Created and trained a safeguarding team;
- Adopted CPOMS – a highly regarded safeguarding logging and tracking software system;
- Staff undergone additional training from Northumberland Designated Officer for Safeguarding;
- Increased School Counsellor hours to full time from September
- Begun comprehensive anti-bullying programme.

### **Behaviour for Learning**

- Overhauled school behaviour policy;
- Tightened uniform rules;
- Reduced tolerance of behaviours in lessons that stop others learning;
- Changed mobile phone use policy;
- Appointed a full-time behaviour manager;
- Proactive application of behaviour policy resulting in significant reduction in behaviour issues over last 3 weeks.

### **Governance/Leadership and Management**

- Organised external review of governance;
- Worked with RSC to add four external governors to governing body;
- Initiation of headteacher recruitment process;
- Overhauled school complaints policy;
- Arranging public meeting to discuss next steps and re-engage with community.

### **Teaching & Learning Expectations**

- Change of line management structure, with tighter and more focused priorities for staff;
- Commitment to work more closely with feeder middle schools to begin preparing students for GCSE study in Years 7 and 8.

The next step is to hold a public meeting to discuss the situation and next steps. It is proposed that this takes place in the town hall, and a date is being sought as a matter of urgency for after the Easter break. Once we know when this is, we will contact all parents, and community members to notify you of details.

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If you have any immediate questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Cairns'.

David Cairns  
Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Wilkes'.

Steve Wilkes  
Acting Headteacher