

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that you have had a great summer break. Can I firstly thank you for your support in helping to make the first two weeks back both calm and purposeful. It is a real joy to walk around our school and see students well-dressed, courteous, hard-working and with the correct equipment. We are all working together on this, but I know that your input here has been especially important.

In the very last week of term, we had a visit from Darren Stewart, an HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate), keen to see how we were progressing in our journey from 'Special Measures' to 'Outstanding'. Although Years 11 and 13 had left, and Years 10 and 12 were on work experience, they were able to see Year 9 taking part in Enterprise week, as well as sample some books, and talk to key staff. Darren will visit us every term, and I am happy to say that we had an honest and largely positive dialogue about where we are as a school, and what we need to do next.

The letter Mr Stewart wrote highlights that we have already made large steps in the areas of safeguarding and behaviour. These were our priorities for the summer term. We will continue to build on these foundations, and now turn our attention to improving attendance and ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment becomes more challenging. It is because these two areas are not yet showing improvement that he feels that we have not made expected progress, even though improvements in other areas is beyond what would have been expected. It was our strategic decision (as governors, acting headteacher, and senior team acting on external advice) to prioritise behaviour and safeguarding. I believe that this was the right decision. We are now focusing acutely on attendance and improving classroom engagement, and I hope that I can continue to call on your support here as parents and carers.

The school continues to receive additional DfE funding to allow a group of educational experts to meet on a three-week cycle at school. At these meetings the Rapid Improvement Group (RIG), now part of the governance structure, hold myself and my team to account, ensuring that the Post-Ofsted Improvement Plan is carried out. You may wish to note that on the group are national advisors, a headteacher, an educational HR specialist, a DfE representative, two governors and Dean Jackson, Director of Education and Children's Service for Northumberland LEA. In addition, we have managed to secure additional funding to allow Neil Hutchinson to be placed with us two days a week, in an advisory role. Neil is a headteacher with years of experience in school improvement. We will be using his expertise to support our work and to act as a mentor to me in the coming months.

I also want to highlight that our feeder middle schools, and the wider Berwick Partnership of Schools, are working ever-more closely with us to ensure consistent processes and smooth transition work. We have already done much work on assessment and are now working on attendance strategies together. I have also met with the chair and deputy chair of governors and Anne-Marie Trevelyan (MP) over the summer holiday, to lobby for additional support for a school in our unique position.

The Ofsted letter outlines what the original areas for improvement were (Pages3 &4), and then a commentary about our progress. It is attached to this email, or can be accessed by using the following hyperlink -

www.berwickacademy.co.uk/Data/Ofsted/BAOfstedCheckingVisit1.pdf

Please continue to talk positively with your children about the school. They are our greatest ambassadors, and it is in their ever-stronger attitudes and hard work that the future of the school and our community lies. Our work is to nurture and enthuse them.

As ever, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. We will be holding a Parent Forum meeting at school at 5.30pm on Thursday 4th October where we will answer any questions and share what work has been done, to date, and what our future plans are. You would be very welcome to attend and participate.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Wilkes

Acting Headteacher

Berwick Academy