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OFSTED PRAISE 'REINVIGORATED' SCHOOL FOR MAKING RAPID IMPROVEMENTS

Duke's Secondary School, part of the NCEA Trust in Ashington, was praised by Ofsted for the speed of action to address areas for improvement and for the progress being seen in improving pupil behaviour, attendance and literacy following their visit to the school in December 2018.

The letter to the school which followed the inspection commended school leaders for "taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement" seen at the time of the previous inspection. The inspection scrutinised leaders' plans for improvement and found evidence throughout the school of these improvements being seen in lessons, behaviours and attitudes.

An inspector commented that pupils had told him that they recognised the changes that have taken place in the classroom, and how pupils are "regularly challenged to be critical thinkers". Reading is improving, with pupil ability having "improved markedly" in comparison with national data.

Steve Gibson, Principal at Duke's School, said: "We are delighted with the findings of this inspection, and particularly that Ofsted have seen improvements. This is an important milestone for the school, and allows us a moment to reflect on and celebrate the hard work of a talented staff team in making these rapid improvements. We will continue our relentless focus to ensure that we achieve our high aspirations for our fantastic pupils and school community."

John Brearley, Chair of Governors, said, speaking on behalf of the Full Governing Body: "This is a really important step to improve the life chances of the pupils in our communities, and our resolve is to make continued improvements over the coming months and years."

The report also reflects the impact of the change in structure from a single academy to form the new NCEA multi-academy trust earlier in 2018. The Trust was praised for the support and challenge provided to drive improvements within the school. Alan Hardie, a national leader for education, has recently been confirmed as the new chief executive officer of the Trust following a period of support as interim CEO bringing his experience and guidance to the school. The school's work with the Church of England's Diocese of Newcastle Education Office was also commended as an important aspect of the school's improvement trajectory.

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Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust is a multi-academy trust providing education to over 2,500 children in schools across south east Northumberland. The schools are NCEA Bishop's Primary School, with campuses in Lynemouth, Ashington and Newbiggin; Castle School, a school for children and young people with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties in Ashington; and Duke's Secondary School, an 11 to 18 school and sixth form in Ashington. The trust aims to enable everyone in our communities to let their light shine.

If you would like more information about this topic, please call Steve Gibson at 01670 816 111 or email steve.gibson@dukes.ncea.org.uk