



## Cathedral Speech 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Welcome

I am delighted that so many could be here to celebrate the achievements of NCEA over the past academic year 2010-11. In particular we are here to celebrate the achievements of these young people: your children, our learners and the future of this region.

Mrs Hinson and Mr Blackburn will in turn go through the achievements of the learners who are here but first it falls to me to briefly cast an eye over what we have achieved in only our second year as The Northumberland Church of England Academy (NCEA).

Whenever I am interviewed for a senior job in education I can guarantee that I will always be asked one particular question. That question is **“What is my vision for the future?”**

I can say (and probably do say) that my vision is that everyone should be aiming for the best and that all our actions should be rooted in a core set of indisputable values. I have asked people who come to me for senior posts to tell me their vision – and they do and it is much the same.

All schools have a vision of what they want the future for them and their children to look like.

However, vision alone is not enough. Good intentions and good words are not enough. Actions and results matter more. The way our actions impact on the lives and futures of young people are what matters.

Young people need support with their reading, writing and their maths.

They need safe places to learn and play.

They need access to the best staff, the best resources, the best equipment and the best opportunities.

Young people need support managing the traumas that will inevitably enter their lives through the actions of others – normally adults who should know better.

Above all else young people need the skills to develop as learners and workers; to develop the skills to be able to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

I believe we at NCEA are working hard to ensure that our young people develop these skills.

NCEA is about more than a vision. It is about action on behalf of our children and their community.

Ofsted paid us a visit in May 2011 and I want to use their comments as the basis for my report to you this evening.

Ofsted said that *the collective drive to improve teaching across the academy is hastening children's progress at all key stages. The academy's clear and effective focus on improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is helping the children to make good overall progress.*

The most notable improvements are seen in Key Stage 3, where current tracking in May 2011 shows that a high proportion of children will achieve Level 5 in English and mathematics. Indeed the outcomes were in the high 90% compared to less than 60% for English and less than 70% for maths two years ago.

At GCSE outcomes have improved by nearly 100% in two years. We were the second highest performing school in Northumberland – beaten only by Berwick and only by 2% points! Next year.....

We have made more progress in the last two years than some schools have made in 5, 6 or 7 years. Last year we moved into the top 100 of schools for progress made by young people at age 16. This year we will be in the top 20, at least.

Let's reflect on that for a moment. We will be in the top 20 schools nationally for progress made by young people at age 16! The top 20 – of over 3,500 schools. How good does that feel?

Key to this have been improvements in the quality of teaching and learning , accompanied by an extremely rigorous and effective approach to improving behaviour.

Ofsted said: *Behaviour management strategies are applied consistently across all campuses and a number of the children spoke convincingly about how much behaviour has improved since the academy opened.* We have just completed another independent review of our sites and that team of 3 said that behaviour was good.

Throughout the Ofsted visit, inspectors observed generally *good behaviour, with the children polite and respectful to teachers and peers.* As a result of these improvements, there were no fixed-period or permanent exclusions in 2010 – 11.

The academy tracks the attendance of all children meticulously and has developed a vast range of effective strategies to improve it. Actions taken make a significant difference to reducing the proportion of children who are persistently absent.

We have a robust evaluation and monitoring schedule by consultants, senior leaders and managers across the academy.

We have a programme of professional development, coaching and sharing good practice combined with robust performance management arrangements which are making a significant difference to the quality of Teaching & Learning.

The proportion of good teaching has increased steadily and the proportion of inadequate teaching almost eliminated.

The vast majority of children now make satisfactory or better progress in lessons.

Curricular developments are contributing positively to improving children' achievement and attendance and ensuring better equality of opportunity for all.

From September 2011 we have introduced a challenging accelerated programme for the very brightest young people in Ys5 and 9 supporting them in their quest for the best university places and futures.

Our unique and highly successful literacy initiatives are helping to hasten children's progress in reading and increase their confidence in sharing their views and feelings.

The 14-19 curriculum has been restructured to meet the developing needs and interests of the children, the vast majority of whom report that there are better options available, with improved advice and guidance procedures.

Ofsted said that: *Alongside the drive to raise standards, senior leaders and managers have worked hard to raise aspirations among staff and children alike, and they are increasingly successful in this endeavour.*

Our young people have responded well to the higher expectations for behaviour and attitudes to learning, which contribute to the calm, purposeful and respectful atmosphere that pervades the academy. Lets say that again: from Ofsted

**calm, purposeful and respectful atmosphere that pervades the academy**

Senior leaders and managers, including the governing body, share a common ambition and drive to raise standards through improved provision across the academy.

## **The Main Judgement Ofsted made was that**

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards. For progress over the last twelve months it doesn't get much better than that.

No other school in the area can deliver this

A nearly 100% improvement at KS4 in two years and good behaviour.

We also have elite sports teams for our talented sports people, are developing talented strands in art and design as well as the performing arts.

We have pioneered community volunteering programmes in the area to develop a sense of community responsibility.

Why are all these things important?

I believe we have begun to create an increasing sense of identity; **a uniqueness that is NCEA.** We have increased the numbers of children we are educating and have been rigorous in the recruitment of some exceptional staff. Like you as parents, I believe that our children only deserve the best. That is all we are prepared to tolerate – the best.

The academy has a vision

Every school in the country has a vision

What separates NCEA from the rest is that we are determined to deliver our vision. To provide a better future for our young people and for our community.

What you see here is just the start.

Thanks go to staff, many of whom are here this evening, learners from primary, secondary and The Centre, to the support we have received from governors and from members of our wider community including the local town councils.

Thanks go to you as parents and family members who support us and your children. The evidence clearly tells us that with family support children do better at school. It's not always easy supporting children, but we must.

I believe we have a secure and successful future ahead of us. Just as we had a successful year last year – which we are here to celebrate.

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