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24 June 2011

Mrs Claire Thompson
Acting headteacher
Moorbrook School
Ainslie Road
Fulwood
Preston
Lancashire
PR2 3DB

Dear Mrs Thompson,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Moorbrook School

Following my visit to your school on 23 June 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2011. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Godman
Additional Inspector

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2011

- Improve the arrangements for safeguarding students by:
 - ensuring that systems for recording child protection information are robust and files are regularly updated and organised.

- Raise achievement and accelerate progress by:
 - tracking students' progress more closely over time
 - developing the curriculum so that it more closely matches students' needs
 - ensuring the support for vulnerable students is adequately targeted and has a positive impact on their learning and development.

- Improve students' behaviour and their social and emotional development so that they develop the personal and social skills they need for the future by:
 - embedding the new behaviour policy and procedures and ensuring that these are consistently applied by all staff
 - ensuring that students are clear about the expectations contained in the new policy and are given the support they need to develop self-resilience
 - ensuring individual students are sufficiently well supported both in and outside the classroom
 - reducing the number of exclusions
 - improving students' knowledge and understanding of life within a multi-ethnic society.

- Improve students' attendance to accelerate progress and help them gain the qualifications they need for the next steps of their education by:
 - ensuring systems for contacting absentees are consistently and methodically carried out
 - working closely with both parents and external agencies
 - monitoring the effectiveness of the procedures
 - supervising students' arrival at school and encouraging more to attend form-time breakfast club.

- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by:
 - clarifying the vision, developing clear aims and setting high expectations for the school
 - creating an effective senior leadership structure and developing the role of middle leaders throughout the school
 - establishing a comprehensive system to monitor and evaluate the school's work
 - ensuring the governing body challenges and holds the school to account for the effectiveness of its provision and students' outcomes.

Special measures: monitoring of Moorbrook School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 23 June 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the associate headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher. She also met a group of students, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection in January 2011, the substantive deputy headteacher has become the acting headteacher, supported by an associate headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed and will take up the post from September 2011. A member of the teaching staff is currently acting as the deputy headteacher. A temporary teacher is covering the work of a teacher on a long-term absence. The school has decided for the time being to leave one other teaching post unfilled.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Students' learning in lessons is showing signs of improvement, particularly when they have opportunities to apply their skills. For example, students in Year 10 enjoyed using their literacy skills to research the economy of the United States of America in the period following the First World War. Students are also increasingly aware of the need to work safely when undertaking practical tasks. A group in Year 8 worked sensibly when they crushed and heated sugar cubes to simulate the stages in the rock cycle. Others in Year 7 handled saws with care when cutting the designs for their key fobs.

The school now has an established system to track progress against students' targets in all the subjects. Although it is too soon to gain a clearer picture of progress over time, staff have started to use the data to identify students at risk of underachievement and to provide additional support where it is needed. As a result, some students have received help for literacy, numeracy or social skills. This is starting to improve their performance in these areas. However, many students' skills for the future remain underdeveloped due to weak literacy skills overall and the persistently poor attendance of some.

Attainment remains very low. A number of students in Year 11 did not complete their courses and dropped out of school. However, the small number that continued to attend gained accreditation at Entry Level and in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy tests. These students have also taken GCSE examinations. The picture for the current Year 10 shows greater improvement, as a number have already gained some accreditation.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement and accelerate progress – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students say that behaviour in lessons has improved. In lessons during this inspection, some students showed increasing responsibility for their own behaviour and were polite and sensible. However, there were also occasions when behaviour remained volatile and disrupted the learning of other students. For example, some students displayed outbursts of anger or inappropriate language. There were also times when students refused to undertake the work set or showed a lack of respect for other students and adults. A number still found it difficult to remain in the classroom during a lesson and walked or ran out. Despite this, behaviour around the school and at break and lunchtimes is generally calmer than reported at the previous inspection.

The gradual improvement in students' behaviour is the result of a more consistent response from teachers and support staff. Intervention by support staff is increasingly timely and this prevents incidents from escalating. Strategies to improve behaviour are starting to have an impact as students have a clearer understanding of what is expected and of the rewards available for acceptable behaviour. The number of students leaving the school site without permission has reduced considerably as have complaints from the community and incidents involving the police. This is due to the sharper analysis and better response of senior leaders.

Attendance remains too low, although the school's data indicate that it is significantly higher for Year 7 as a result of improved support and increasingly valued incentives. School records show that interventions which are more closely targeted and a more interesting curriculum are helping to improve the attendance of a number of persistent absentees.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve students' behaviour and their social and emotional development so that they develop the personal and social skills they need for the future – satisfactory
- improve students' attendance to accelerate progress and help them gain the qualifications they need for the next steps of their education – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

Where teaching is stronger, there are higher expectations and greater challenge. In these lessons, students are increasingly able to work independently and to undertake practical investigations. Most lessons proceed at a faster pace so that students are completing more work. Teaching assistants continue to encourage appropriate behaviour. In a growing proportion of lessons they support learning by helping students to understand what is required in their written work.

The school recognises that the limited use of assessment to support learning persists as a weakness and that action to improve this is a crucial step in raising achievement. Although students receive feedback on their work, this does not give them sufficient indication as to what they need to do to improve it.

The curriculum is starting to show some very early signs of improvement. For example, a better analysis of gaps in students' skills is giving staff a clearer indication of how to tailor activities to meet their needs more effectively. Closer consideration is being given to the introduction of more vocational activities so that students have better opportunities to prepare for the world of work. Care, guidance and support are improving as the school develops more secure arrangements for responding to students' personal and social needs and to ensuring the school is a safer place for students and adults.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The partnership between the acting headteacher and the associate headteacher has been a key factor in securing improvements to date. Together they have developed increasingly robust systems to respond to the school's areas for improvement, with thorough records of the impact of these. Staff and students recognise that the acting headteacher has brought greater stability to the school. This sense of growing steadiness is increased by the appointment of the permanent headteacher with effect from September. The acting deputy headteacher has introduced an increasingly effective system to track students' progress. This provides a better basis for improving the quality of teaching and for planning provision to raise students' achievement. The roles of middle leaders remain underdeveloped.

The governing body has a better knowledge of the school's strengths and areas needing development. Its members now receive regular reports from senior leaders on the school's improvement. Following training, they also have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them and of how to challenge the school to make further improvements.

Arrangements for safeguarding students now meet requirements. Records of support for individual students and of incidents are better organised, clearly dated and followed up. Staff have received updated training on child protection. Students comment that they feel much safer in school than in the past.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the arrangements for safeguarding students – good
- strengthen the leadership and management of the school – satisfactory

External support

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements and is starting to steer the school's improvement. Its detailed focus on the areas in need of greatest improvement is helping the school to respond to these priorities. The good support of the local authority adviser for monitoring and intervention has helped develop leaders' skills in evaluation. In

turn, this has initiated the first stages of improvement. The local authority has also been instrumental in securing the support of the associate headteacher. This has increased the stability of the school's leadership in recent months.