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8 December 2011

Mr M Ironmonger
Headteacher
Moorbrook School
Ainslie Road
Fulwood
Preston
Lancashire
PR2 3DB

Dear Mr Ironmonger

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Moorbrook School

Following my visit to your school on 7 December 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 second 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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

September 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 second monitoring inspection on 7 December 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of students, parents, members and the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

A new headteacher joined the school in September 2011.

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

Students' achievement shows signs of consistent improvement since the last monitoring inspection. This is because learning in lessons is more effective and students enjoy the opportunities to be actively involved. This is helping to boost their achievement. For example, in an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, Year 8 students worked independently to develop control systems for a simulated fairground ride. The lesson was planned to give a greater degree of challenge for the more-able students, who relished this opportunity and sustained their engagement into break time. In a Year 10 and 11 football lesson, all the students showed their growing social skills and a developing sense of team work and responsibility.

The school's tracking data show students' accelerated progress in science, which is confirmed by work in their books. In a Year 10 science lesson, students consolidated their understanding of genetics, showing a strongly improving use of technical vocabulary. Despite this, a number of students from each year group have gaps in their knowledge of everyday language and in related communication and literacy skills. Although some assessments have been undertaken in partnership with a speech and language therapist, programmes to improve this aspect of learning remain underdeveloped. This is inhibiting the progress of some students, particularly in English, although the learning of others in Key Stage 4 is accelerating towards GCSE accreditation in the subject. Progress in mathematics shows some slight signs of improvement. Students have been taught by a number of different teachers this term, but are now beginning to settle and to make better progress as a result of the current staffing arrangements.

Students whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable, appreciate the opportunity to start the day in the nurture group. However, as their confidence grows they are increasingly eager to participate in lessons alongside their peers. For example, students from the nurture group chose to go to lessons in ICT and English, where they gained skills as well as confidence.

The attainment of Year 11 students at the end of the last school year was low. However, the attainment of the current Key Stage 4 students is higher. Some, in both Years 10 and 11, have already gained Entry Level Certificates and have passed the adult literacy and numeracy tests. There are raised expectations of success at the end of this school year in GCSE English, mathematics, science and physical education.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement and accelerate progress – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour in lessons is better, with no evidence of the outbursts of anger or inappropriate language noted at the last monitoring inspection. In a majority of the lessons seen, students were engaged, remained on-task and completed the work set for them. Where a small number had difficulty settling or became disengaged, gentle coaxing by adults generally enabled them to resume work without disruption. Some recognised that they needed time away from the lesson and showed greater self-control, returning to the lesson when they were calmer and more confident. Although some students find it hard to stay in their lessons, staff monitor and handle this with increasing effectiveness and so learning is disrupted less frequently. Support for individuals is helping to increase students' involvement in learning and students are clearer about what is expected of them. However, some still need constant reminders, for example, about punctuality to lessons. Behaviour at break times is more constructive. In part, this is because staff take a stronger lead in arranging football games or supervising access to ICT. There is still some use of fixed-term exclusions for serious incidents, but this is much reduced in comparison to this time last year.

School data show considerable improvement in attendance levels, particularly at Key Stage 3. Staff are increasingly able to account for the whereabouts of all students and many students at both key stages are more eager to attend as their success in school grows. The raised profile of the importance of regular attendance is understood by most pupils, with signs that the majority are responding positively to this. Students' improving attendance, their developing basic skills and more positive attitudes to work are helping them to become better prepared for the next stage of education or employment.

Progress since the last monitoring 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 – good
- improve students' attendance to accelerate progress and help them gain the qualifications they need for the next steps of their education – good

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is improving. Work is more closely matched to the needs and interests of the students, enabling increasingly rapid progress. Teaching assistants show a sharper focus on supporting learning, rather than managing behaviour. For example,

sometimes they work with a small group who find the lesson content difficult. At other times, they work on the same content but outside the classroom with those who find it too challenging to be in the classroom with others. There are a greater number of opportunities for students to work independently and a greater amount of work is completed.

Students' work is marked regularly, with clearer guidance on what the students have done well, the National Curriculum level or GCSE grade of the work and how it can be improved. For many students this has had a marked effect on their engagement and progress, particularly in English and science. In lessons, teachers increasingly adjust the content in line with students' responses. However, there continue to be missed opportunities for students to evaluate their own or others' learning and to improve their performance as a result.

The curriculum is more suitable for the students' needs and is increasing their interest and enjoyment, particularly where there is a greater emphasis on practical activities. Higher expectations and a closer focus on GCSE requirements is challenging the more-able and raising their aspirations. However, intervention, especially to close the gaps in some students' communication and literacy skills, remains underdeveloped. This is creating a barrier to higher achievement for these students.

Stronger care, guidance and support, particularly in the nurture group, are helping students to get off to a better start at the beginning of the school day. Parents comment on the school's greater commitment to not giving up on students and feel that their children are cared for increasingly well.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher has established a calmer atmosphere in the school and staff and students are starting to feel more confident and secure as a result. Expectations of achievement, attendance and behaviour are higher and this is helping to drive school improvement. The permanent appointments of the headteacher and deputy headteacher and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all staff have secured more stable leadership of the school's work. The key stage leaders are developing their skills in evaluating the quality of teaching and in checking students' progress. They also take a greater role in monitoring the day-to-day management of behaviour. These steps and the consistent actions of leaders are providing greater clarity and a more widely shared understanding of what is required to improve the school.

A more accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and remaining areas for development is giving all concerned a clearer picture of the next steps in school improvement. Members of the governing body are better informed about the school's work and have taken on a responsibility for checking progress with each area for improvement. They are also visiting the school during the working day and this is helping them to steer the school's work in the right direction. Parents report an improvement in their children's interest and engagement and are positive about how the school has started to turn their child's life around.

The school's records and arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. However, a small number of points were brought to the headteacher's attention during the inspection. These relate to ensuring that day-to-day practice is as effective as it can be in ensuring students' well-being.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

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

External support

The local authority adviser for monitoring and intervention has played a key role in raising expectations, for example, about the quality of teaching necessary to raise students' achievement. Advanced skills teachers have also worked in a practical and positive way alongside teachers to help them to develop their knowledge and skills in teaching the different subjects. This work has contributed well to the school's improvement since the last monitoring inspection, although the local authority recognises there remains more to do to develop the use of assessment to support students' learning. The county attendance adviser has also helped the school to increase students' attendance.