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Mr John Ayres
Headteacher
Moorcroft School
Bramble Close
Hillingdon
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Dear Mr Ayres

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moorcroft School T/A The Eden Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the academy Principal, head of school, academy lead for curriculum, a group of staff, a group of students, three members of the governing body and the academy chief executive officer. In addition, I visited every classroom, evaluated the school's action plan, and examined records of lesson observations, school assessment data and minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Two teachers left the school shortly after the last inspection and three joined in January 2013. Since January the academy lead for curriculum and assessment, who is also an Advanced Skills Teacher, has been working in the school three days a week. A senior teacher was made acting head of school in February and appointed to the substantive post in May. A new part-time assistant headteacher post has been established, with recruitment underway. Governance is being restructured. Overall responsibility for the academy is residing with the Board of Directors, with local governing bodies replacing the operational boards in each of the schools. From

September 2013, an outstanding special school will join the current group of three schools that form The Eden Academy.

Main findings

Following the last inspection the academy Principal acted with determination and speed, providing clear steer to staff. The good quality action plan, written shortly before the last inspection, sharply focuses on the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. The Principal's rapid implementation of the plan is reflected in the introduction of a new curriculum and timetable shortly after the inspection. This has enabled teachers be leaders of learning in their classrooms, ensuring that their learning support assistants are fully briefed and able to provide high quality one-to-one teaching. Whilst the new curriculum is highly personalised to students' needs, the academy recognises that for sixth form students activities and courses are not always age appropriate.

New tracking systems, established by the academy lead for curriculum and assessment, enable teachers and senior leaders to assess and review students' small steps of development. A rigorous programme of lesson observations and short visits to lessons, supported by feedback to teachers and learning support assistants, and well-planned training have led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers are maximising the use of lesson time for learning and meeting the special educational needs of each student. They are more effectively using assessment to plan and reshape learning in lessons. Consequently, students' levels of engagement have significantly increased and they are making much more secure progress.

The new head of school is now taking the lead in improvement planning, extending the action plan and revising goals to take the school into the next phase of improvement. The role of team leaders in achieving these and sustaining the school's rapid progress is in the process of being established.

Governors and the chief executive officer are exceptionally knowledgeable about the needs of students with complex educational and daily living needs. Minutes of meetings show they are now much better informed about the work of the school and regularly monitor the impact of its action plan. Consequently, they are highly effective at supporting the school's journey of improvement.

Senior leaders, governors and directors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- improve the sixth form curriculum by providing students with a greater range of age-appropriate activities and courses
- establish and develop the planned team leader roles to help drive the next stage of the school's journey of improvement.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Governors make good use of local authority training to ensure their knowledge is current and provides greater challenge to the school. In January 2013, an external education consultant helped to accelerate the development of the new curriculum. Most significantly, the school is making excellent use of the strengths within the academy group, including the cross-academy lead for curriculum and assessment. A range of approaches including the weekly teaching workshops run by academy staff and visits to other schools within the group are leading to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching. For example, teachers now set much higher expectations of what the students can and do achieve.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Hillingdon, the academy's chief executive officer and The Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector