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27 February 2014

Mrs Lynne Wilson  
Headteacher  
Abraham Moss Community School  
Crescent Rd  
Crumpsall  
Manchester  
Greater Manchester  
M8 5UF

Dear Mrs Wilson

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Abraham Moss Community School, Manchester**

Following my visit to your school on 26 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. 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 January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- make sure that all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. So that all students are clear about the school's code of conduct and the consequences of failing to comply with it
- make sure that teachers' marking of students work is sharper. So that students know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. In addition students should be given time to respond to their teachers' comments, enabling students to learn from their mistakes
- refine the school development plan so that it is clear what the order of priorities are and the success criteria enable senior leaders and governors to evaluate the success of the actions taken to improve the school.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, teachers who have responsibility for leading and managing the subject areas of English, mathematics and science and a group of eight, articulate Year 10 students who were keen to share with me their opinions about the school. I also met with a group of governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. I made a number of short visits to lessons, accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team. These visits gave me the opportunity to introduce myself to some of your colleagues and observe groups of students, in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, undertake a range of activities in English, mathematics and science. I scrutinised the work in a sample of books from students in Year 7 and Year 9. I evaluated the school's development plan and senior leaders' analyses of the progress data for students in Year 9 and Year 11.

## **Context**

You are the acting headteacher and will continue in this role until the governing body, assisted by the local authority, recruit someone to the permanent position.

## **Main findings**

You, your colleagues and members of the governing body accept that the judgements of the most recent inspection were the correct ones for the school. There is collective belief that the areas for improvement, described in the report, are the right ones and provide clear sign posts for the school on its journey of improvement.

In order to improve the quality of teaching and in particular the standard of teachers' questioning you have quickly identified those teachers who are skilled in this area. Your intention is that you will use these teachers as models of good practice for their colleagues. Senior leaders and heads of department have led training for their colleagues in questioning techniques designed to make students think hard about what they are learning and deepen their understanding. However, it is early days and there has been insufficient time to measure the impact of these initiatives on teachers' practice or students' learning.

Since the inspection subject leaders have been given much greater responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas and as a result are more accountable for the standards achieved by the students. Subject leaders regularly observe their colleagues teach, providing them with feedback on aspects of their work that are strong and those that require improvement. These areas for improvement are then followed up at the next observation. This strategy has only been in place for a relatively short time and consequently it is too early to assess its long term impact.

Newly qualified teachers are benefitting from the support they receive from their mentors. Since the inspection a number of recently qualified staff have availed themselves of the opportunity to be filmed teaching. This has provided these colleagues with real-time evidence of their classroom practice, enabling them to reflect on their strengths, identify areas for development and then take action to address them. You have evidence that the quality of their teaching is improving as a result.

In order to address students' weak progress in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 senior leaders have taken the decision to increase the number of staff teaching these subjects in Years' 7 to 9. This strategy has reduced group sizes and enabled students to receive more personalised support. The school's data indicate that this approach is having a positive impact on achievement; with students making much faster progress in both subjects than they were this time last year.

Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of how well the school is doing as a result of reliable and honest self-evaluation. The local authority has brokered the support of a national leader of governance to carry out a review of how well the governing body are carrying out their roles and responsibilities. As a result, governors are now better equipped to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of their work and the standards achieved by the students.

In response to the findings of the inspection senior leaders rapidly reviewed the school's behaviour policy and in particular those aspects related to students' behaviour during lessons. The students I spoke with said that since the inspection behaviour in lessons has improved. They informed me that behaviour is at least good when teaching is engaging and the teacher has formed productive relationships with their students. However, this is not always the case with some teachers not taking enough account of the way students learn when planning their lessons. When this happens students can become bored and disruptive. The students also said that some teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and as a result, the boundaries as to what is acceptable behaviour can become blurred.

Scrutiny of students work shows that marking is still an area for development as it was at the time of the inspection. In both the English and mathematics books I scrutinised marking is not sharp enough. Teachers' comments are often not followed up by students and as a result opportunities are missed for students to learn from their mistakes. In mathematics there is evidence of more able pupils being given more challenging tasks to do. However, opportunities for these students to deepen their mathematical understanding by carrying out investigations and solving problems set in real life contexts are being missed. Consequently, teachers' assessments of the levels that students are working at, particularly more able students in Year 9, are too generous.

The school development plan has been re-written to take account the findings of the recent inspection. It is detailed and actions to address each of the improvement priorities in the plan are clearly described. Responsibility for each of the actions in the plan is shared among a range of colleagues therefore strengthening the capacity of leaders and managers across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. However, some of the success criteria are not sharp enough and there is a lack of clear milestones to enable governors to assess the progress being made towards achieving each of the priorities in the plan. The targets for improvement are not in an order of priority and so it is not clear which should be tackled first in order to bring about the most rapid gains in students' outcomes.

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**

The local authority is providing effective support to leaders and managers to meet the needs of the school. Local authority officers have been instrumental in engaging a national leader of governance to carry out a review of the governing body. As a result governors have a clear plan of action to inform their work in the future. This plan includes appropriate training to help them become more effective in their role. The school's progress against the priorities in the development plan is being closely monitored by the local authority's Director of Education and Skills. This is providing another layer of support and challenge to senior leaders in order to maintain an energetic pace of change. The local authority has also arranged effective support for you from the headteacher of a local successful school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**