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Mr Mick Ironmonger
Headteacher
Moorbrook School
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Dear Mr Ironmonger

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moorbrook School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- sharpen the school's action plan so that impact of actions taken by leaders can be evaluated in terms of improvements in students' progress
- ensure a tracking system is put place so that the implementation of actions, identified in the action plan, can be monitored effectively
- provide a short summary of the action plan so that it is easy for all stakeholders to understand and follow what needs to be and what has been achieved
- ensure Key Stage 4 students have the opportunity to gain relevant qualifications both in every subject taught at the school and while taking part in off-site alternative provision

- ensure the good practice in teaching and learning already seen in some areas of the school is shared with all teachers so that students make good progress in all subjects
- ensure that teachers and leaders benefit from opportunities to observe and share good practice in teaching and learning in other good and outstanding schools similar in nature to Moorbrook School.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, students, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Also during the inspection a discussion was held with a teacher and a sample of students' work, along with various documents provided by the school, was analysed, in order to judge the impact of the action taken since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has left the school. This vacancy has been filled on permanent basis by an experienced teacher. One higher level teaching assistant has left the school. This vacancy has been filled on a temporary basis by a newly qualified teacher. One teaching assistant has also left the school. Leaders decided to defer replacing this member of staff until such a time that an increase in student numbers and as a consequence, the school budget will allow further recruitment.

Main findings

It is clear from the school's action plan that leaders believe, quite rightly, that improving the quality of teaching is the key to raising achievement and improving behaviour across the school. Actions specified in the school action plan by leaders are both extensive and appropriate. However, the vast majority of actions are not clearly linked to improvements in students' progress and consequently their impact on students' learning cannot be assessed accurately.

Leaders have worked well with the local authority to secure training for all staff in how to promote effectively students' literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school. Although it is too early to evaluate the full impact of this training there are green shoots of progress evident around the school. For example, some students are beginning to write more in their work books. Also, teachers are beginning to use effective questioning skills in order to encourage students to give fuller answers which in turn is improving students' speaking and listening skills.

The behaviour policy has been reviewed by leaders with input from staff. An updated policy has been introduced and this places an appropriate emphasis on the respect and tolerance of others. Students spoken with said that the system of recording their

behaviour throughout the day is easy to understand and is helping them to improve their behaviour. However, the school's data on students' behaviour has yet to be analysed fully by leaders and therefore it is too early to judge the full impact of the changes in behaviour management.

The school has acted swiftly to improve the level of respect students demonstrate towards one another. A new system of mixed age tutor groups is not only proving popular with the students spoken with but is also effective in ensuring a calm start to the day. Anecdotal evidence provided by the school demonstrates that students' attitudes to learning have also improved since the last inspection. Students leave their registration class and attend their first lesson promptly and ready to learn more frequently than they did before the inspection.

Leaders have taken appropriate action to put systems in place in order to gather information, for example about students' behaviour, so that they can make accurate judgements about how effectively the school is progressing. Governors have specific lead and reporting responsibilities linked directly to aspects of the school's action plan. Governors visit school frequently to speak with students and adults and to observe the day to day milieu of the school. As a result they have an accurate understanding of the ethos of the school and how behaviour and attitudes are beginning to improve. Leaders though, are yet to pull the plethora of information together in order to make their own, well-informed, judgements about the overall effectiveness of the school.

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

Since the last inspection, the support and challenge provided by the local authority has been high in terms of both cost and time. The local authority has provided a written contract of support and challenge for the school and this is beginning to be effective in steering leaders towards improving the overall effectiveness of the school. The local authority has been effective in brokering support from other similar schools within the county. For example, the school is now receiving direct support from a subject leader in education as a means of sharing good practice in science. As with other actions taken by the school, it is too early to judge the full impact of local authority support because changes made are yet to be fully embedded into the every day practice of the school.

Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to make effective use of other similar schools within the region. Immediate action must be taken so that leaders, teachers and other adults have the opportunity to benefit from observing innovative practice and to share ideas about what good progress looks like.

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

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector