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Mr Ron Peden
Headteacher
Moston Fields Primary School
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Dear Mr Peden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moston Fields Primary School, Manchester

Following my visit to your school on 24 March 2015, 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 November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- improve the school action plan to include clear and measurable milestones so that senior leaders and governors can check that the plan is working
- more rigorously check that agreed school policies are consistently used to best effect to improve the outcomes for pupils, and that all subject leaders lead by example in applying these policies to the subjects for which they are responsible.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and middle leaders, two representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans and other documents relating to school improvement were evaluated and some pupils' work was examined. Accompanied by you, I visited every classroom to see the school at work and to look at the impact of the actions taken by leaders to further improve the school.

Context

Since the last inspection in November 2014, two governors have left and two new governors have joined the school's governing body. One member of staff has left their post and one member of staff has returned from maternity leave.

Main findings

From a slow start immediately following the last inspection, during which leaders were planning the actions to take, the pace of improvement in the school has accelerated rapidly because of a renewed vigour from senior leaders and governors. This has driven the implementation of appropriate actions to develop teaching and learning and leadership since the start of the spring term. The school's own assessment data shows that the actions taken by leaders are having the desired impact on learning and that pupils' standards of attainment in writing and mathematics are improving quickly.

Leaders use a cycle of termly action plans to help them focus their actions to improve the school. These plans contain appropriate actions which are designed to address the issues identified at the school's last inspection. The plans include an overview of your high expectations of what pupils should achieve at the end of the year. Governors and senior leaders do not, however, find it easy to check that the plan is working because it does not contain sufficient milestones that clearly identify expected interim outcomes from actions at specific points in time.

You are held to account by governors through more frequent formal meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body. These meetings allow the early identification of any issues and check the impact of actions by leaders to address them. The outcomes of these meetings are recorded and shared with all governors, who consequently are better informed about how the school is improving.

You have made effective use of the support provided by an external consultant who has worked with the school since January. This support has allowed you to reflect upon your leadership styles and practices and has improved communication between

senior leaders who now share a clear vision as to how to improve the school; leaders operate as a cohesive team to drive school improvement.

Senior leaders now delegate more responsibility to subject and key stage leaders and more carefully plan how they provide opportunities for these middle leaders to undertake and develop their roles. For example, one key stage leader, who has recently returned from maternity leave, does not currently have responsibility to teach a particular class because of a temporary change to her timetable. This has allowed her to support other teachers in her key stage to improve the quality of teaching. Additionally, the timetable for teachers' planning and preparation time is now deliberately managed so as to allow leaders who are new to their role to develop their practice by working alongside more experienced leaders.

Middle leaders are now more rigorously held to account by senior leaders and governors for the impact of their actions because of a raised expectation that they will attend some governors' meetings to explain the standards in their subjects and the outcomes of any actions they have taken. For example, the middle leader responsible for computing recently delivered a clear and informative presentation to governors regarding developments in their subject. Not all middle leaders demonstrate this improving trend in standards of leadership. Some lack clarity in how they record and articulate their plans and the impact of their actions while others, on occasions, do not follow their own policies or meet their leaders' shared expectations. Senior leaders are aware of these inconsistencies and are planning appropriate action to improve the situation.

Senior leaders' actions to quickly bring about improvements in the quality of teaching in all key stages, and in particular in mathematics and writing, are having positive impact. The implementation of a training and development plan, called 'going for good', is correctly focused on raising teachers' expectations and improving their skills. This term the programme has focused on how teachers develop pupils' confidence and abilities in applying their mathematical skills to problem-solving. A series of staff meetings has been used to train staff in helpful ways to support pupils and some teachers have been given opportunities to visit other schools to see good practice. Support from a local headteacher, who is an expert in the teaching of mathematics, complements and enhances the work of the school's mathematics subject leader. Work seen in pupils' books demonstrates the impact of this training and shows clear progress in pupils' abilities to apply their mathematical skills. Teachers are now held more frequently to account for the impact they have on pupils' learning through regular meetings that challenge them about the progress that their pupils make. These meetings effectively identify any underperformance by pupils and confirm what teachers are going to do to put it right. The impact of teachers' actions is followed up and checked at subsequent meetings.

Pupils know better what to do to improve their work because the quality of feedback provided by their teachers is improving. Following a review of the school's marking policy, 'response time', where pupils are given time in lessons to correct

misconceptions or deepen their understanding by responding to challenges set by teachers, is now an expectation. In some subjects however, particularly mathematics, the application of the school's policy around how pupils use their 'response time' is not always consistently applied. This means the impact of the significant amount of time invested by teachers in the detailed marking of pupils' work to help them improve is diminished.

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 school has welcomed and engaged with the increased challenge and monitoring by local authority officers. The local authority's provision of additional financial resources and the brokering of support from external providers, including from other schools, is appropriate and having positive impact on improving the school.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector