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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 22 April 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 second 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher along with the deputy headteacher, teachers, students and two members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I held a short meeting with the headteacher of a local special school who has been appointed to provide mentoring support to the deputy headteacher. I also took opportunities to visit classrooms and to scrutinise students' work books along with a range of documents provided by the school.

Context

The incumbent headteacher intends to retire with effect from 31 May 2015. The current deputy headteacher has been appointed as headteacher with effect from 1 June 2015.

Main findings

Leaders have embedded successfully a range of systems to move the school to good. Leaders' systematic approach to their observation of learning along with their scrutiny of students' work have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers welcome the good quality feedback given to them by leaders. Leaders' own records show that the vast majority of teachers have responded to feedback by improving their teaching. For example, the quality of teachers' assessment of students' work has improved and this in turn has led to students' improved understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Leaders have taken appropriate action when they have identified weak teaching.

Teachers and as a result their students, have benefitted from adults' sharing of good practice in teaching and learning. For example, the school's own records show that students have increased their rate of progress in science following the science teacher's visit to a local outstanding school. Investigative work in science has become more frequent compared to before the teacher's visit. Students spoken with said that science lessons are more enjoyable and feel that they are making more progress than before my last visit; a view which is corroborated by the school's own records.

Students have also benefitted from whole staff training, provided by a local authority consultant, in techniques to improve students' reading and spelling. A whole school approach to the teaching of letters and sounds has been implemented successfully. Leaders analysis of their own data shows that the good majority of students have improved both their reading and spelling skills compared to before the training took place.

Appropriate action has been taken to improve the Key Stage 4 curriculum as a means of making learning for this group of students interesting, relevant and supportive of their next steps in education. Steps have already been taken to ensure all courses taught in school, along with those delivered at off-site alternative provision, lead to appropriate qualifications. Strong links with an outstanding special school in another local authority have resulted in a rich and varied curriculum which will meet the specific needs of students. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these actions on students' outcomes.

Although aspects of students' behaviour still require improvement the areas for attention identified in my previous visit have been secured. For example, the use of mixed-aged tutor groups provides a calm and orderly start to the day for students.

Students respond appropriately by attending their lessons promptly. Furthermore, training given to all staff in how to tackle low level disruption through effective communication has been implemented well across the school. Leaders' own analysis of data show the number of incidents of internal truancy has more than halved compared to a similar period prior to the training.

Leaders have strengthened the school improvement plan by drawing up a summary timeline of planned actions. Progress in relation to each action can be easily recorded and teachers and teaching assistants have an accurate view of how they can and do contribute to the success of the school. Leaders' records along with the colour coded timeline show that leaders have acted swiftly to ensure deadlines for completion are adhered to. Leaders actions have ensured that the pace of improvement has picked up sufficiently to move the school to good at its next inspection.

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

External support

Leaders have used effectively the substantial support provided by the local authority. Local authority interventions such as the identification of partner schools and provision of whole staff training by local authority consultants have been instrumental in strengthening key areas for improvement. For example, governors' systems to judge for themselves the quality of teaching have been boosted by the local authority's monitoring and intervention advisor's scrutiny of leaders observations of learning. Governors are confident that they can make robust judgements because the information they are given by leaders, about the quality of teaching, is secure.

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