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Mr M Peart
Forest Moor School
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Dear Mr Peart

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Forest Moor School

Following my visit to your school on 10 December 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 July 2015. 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 in order to become a good school. However, you and governors should take the following further action:

- Ensure that the school development plan includes precisely worded targets to be achieved each half term, so the school improvement committee can check and be confident that the school is making rapid progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was evaluated. We visited lessons, reviewed pupils' books and looked at teachers' planning. I met with the behaviour and attendance officer who has been working in the school as the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), with the teacher who is taking

over that role, and the speech and language therapist (SaLT) provided by the local national health trust.

I enjoyed lunch with pupils and staff, and talked with pupils during their free time.

Context

You took up your post as headteacher on the second day of the last inspection. A new teacher who joined the staff in September, to teach science, and personal and social education, will take up the SENCO role in January 2016. You have appointed a new deputy headteacher and lead teacher for Key Stage 2; both are due to start in January 2016.

After a period of uncertainty about the school's future, the local authority have confirmed the long term need for the school to provide education to pupils aged nine to 16 with social, emotional and mental health special educational needs.

Main findings

Since the last inspection you have undertaken an in-depth review of all aspects of the school's work. You identified staff training needs and started training programmes to develop the ability of staff to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Your successful work to secure new appointments has put the school on a more secure footing from which to move forward in the spring term.

The governors and local authority are providing you with a good level of support as a new headteacher. They recognise the need for this to continue and the urgent need to identify a mentor headteacher to provide you with professional support.

The development plan covers most of the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection and includes other priorities identified by yourself and governors. The plan lacks measurable targets that the governors could use to track progress and hold leaders to account. You and the Chair of the Governing Body confirmed that a revised plan will be agreed by the governing body on 18 January 2016.

Teaching, learning and assessment are improving. The impact of your determination for all pupils to make good progress can be seen in their books. During our visits to lessons, evidence in pupils' books and work on display indicates that 'good days' are more frequent than 'off days'.

The introduction of a new assessment system is helping teachers and leaders to track the small steps in progress that each pupil makes. The SENCO, with very effective support from the SaLT, is developing more finely-tuned plans for pupils. The plans are beginning to demonstrate the necessary forensic approach to understanding and overcoming individual pupils' barriers to learning.

Teachers are developing skills to use the plans in lessons to help pupils overcome barriers to their learning and increase their emotional stability. As a result, pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 are making more progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. You recognise that more needs to be done to ensure all teachers carefully plan lessons matched to the detailed needs of pupils, and consistently use the school's planning, feedback and marking policies.

The focus on understanding and developing pupils' communication skills is helping to develop their writing skills. Some pupils are now writing independently and confidently at length. Equally important, some pupils are beginning to accept the need to improve their work – even if this means a re-write.

Pupils' attendance is improving, particularly in Key Stage 2 where the small number of pupils have achieved 100% attendance so far this term. Overall attendance has improved by 9.6% when compared with the same period last year. Fixed-term exclusions have risen slightly for a small number of pupils. This is due, in part, to their response to your determination to establish clear expectations of behaviour. Staff training has introduced consistency and confidence in adults' responses to managing pupils' unacceptable behaviours. Staff are keen to further develop this approach.

The work of teaching assistants is developing. Three are being trained by the SaLT as 'communication champions'. These staff are positively supporting other staff to follow individual pupils' communication plans. However, teachers do not always plan for the most productive use of teaching assistants in lessons. During our visits to lessons it was clear that this remains an area for improvement.

The governors and local authority agree it is a priority to make the right provision on site for Key Stage 4 pupils so that their attendance and outcomes improve from the current low level achieved at a range of alternative providers.

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

The local authority is providing a good level of support. The plan to withdraw the two behaviour and attendance advisers is appropriate as the school is in a position to develop the new middle leaders. The planned additional support for quality assurance purposes is also appropriate.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector