

Moorbrook School

Ainslie Road, Fulwood, Preston, Lancashire PR2 3DB

Inspection dates

4–5 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There is a small number of pupils who continue to experience difficulties in their attendance, in school and occasionally in lessons.
- A small number of pupils do not always engage fully in school life so they do not make the same progress from their starting points as their peers.
- Since the last inspection, until recently, the pace of improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment had been slow. This was because previous school leaders were focusing more on the behaviour of pupils rather than their learning.
- Staff do not have the range of skills or experience to effectively check the quality of teaching, support, learning and assessment.
- There are still a few occasions when pupils become distracted from their learning because of their behavioural choices. This can affect the pace of learning for them and other pupils.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have had to focus on the impact of staffing disruptions and a reduction in pupil numbers. As a result, the pace of school improvement was adversely affected.
- Not all staff are trained in how best to recognise and manage the needs of pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health needs.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and her leadership team, with the support of a strong governing body, have breathed new life into the school. There is now high staff morale and a clear direction for change.
- Those pupils who attend school regularly and engage in lessons make good progress from their starting points, especially in reading and spelling.
- The quality of teaching, support for learning, and assessment is rapidly improving.
- Leaders have overseen a reduction in challenging behaviour in school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved.
- The curriculum provides a range of enriching activities to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain and further develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - developing the lesson observation and feedback skills of all staff through sharing the good practice already in evidence at the school
 - improving staff questioning skills and responses to pupils' questions.

- Further improve pupils' attendance, engagement in learning and academic progress, by:
 - ensuring that all staff improve their knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties and who find it hard to attend school or lessons
 - encouraging pupils to take greater responsibility for their attendance in school and lessons
 - building on the positive partnership working with other agencies and families to further improve attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, and her newly formed senior leadership team, are now successfully addressing the key issues from the last inspection. There is a greater sense of purpose and direction accompanied by higher staff morale. Governors say that the headteacher states that 'the phoenix must rise from the ashes'.
- Staff and pupils spoken to say that there has been a change in the culture of the school so that there is a greater focus on learning. All pupils, despite the level of persistent absence of some pupils, gain an external award on leaving school.
- A strong, knowledgeable governing body has overseen the introduction of robust policies and procedures, with leaders being held to account through governing body strategy meetings. As a result, there have been sustained reductions in low-level disruption in lessons, serious incidents and fixed-term exclusions, alongside greater evidence of good-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- The local authority has brokered support for the school from a range of sources, including two local special school headteachers. Leaders have benefited from the sharing of best practice and now have the capacity to further develop the skills of other leaders, for example, in observing lessons and providing effective feedback to teaching and teaching assistant colleagues. These actions are already having a sustainable impact on improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.
- The headteacher has overseen a change in the timings of the school day so that there is greater focus on lesson planning, preparation and staff training. Also, staff policies have been strengthened to ensure a notable reduction in staff absences.
- School improvement planning is precisely focused on the need to increase pupils' attendance and engagement so that they then benefit fully from the school's improved curriculum. Leaders have provided clear evidence to support the efforts made by the school to link effectively with other agencies and parents to improve the attendance of individual pupils. However, the impact of these actions has been varied.
- The school's systems for checking on pupils' progress have been adapted to include aspects of learning, behaviour and well-being, so that clear links are made between academic progress and attendance. Governors are well informed by senior leaders about the progress being made by all pupils and in all subjects, through their pupils' outcomes strategy group meetings.
- Despite the continued persistent absence of a small group of pupils, a number of older pupils are benefiting from the increased range of curriculum opportunities and courses provided on and off site, for example, in cast fishing or painting and decorating. Pupils spoken to say that they enjoy these activities, which have motivated them to attend and engage in school life more frequently.
- The emphasis made by all staff to improve pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the promotion of British values of tolerance, respect, democracy and the rule of law, was evident during the inspection, for example, when staff consistently model expected social behaviour. The cultural development of pupils is enhanced, for example, when they have opportunities to study and discuss the war poets.
- Improved partnership working with parents through written communication, home visits and parents evenings is beginning to have some positive effects in regard to pupils' attendance and subsequent academic progress.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are passionate about the school and are keen for it to improve and become good overall. They have ensured the introduction of strong performance management policies and procedures which inform their decision making as to whether or not teachers are successful in their applications to move up the pay scale.
 - The governing body has a range of committees and has named governors for each of their four strategy groups. Strategy groups meet regularly and hold leaders to account, for example, about the use and impact of the pupil premium money. Governors know that this funding has been well-used to improve pupils' reading and spelling abilities over the past year. The school has not received Year 7 catch-up funding (to use towards improving Year 7 pupils' literacy and numeracy levels).
 - Governors manage the school's delegated budget efficiently. They have made the most effective use of the school's reduced funding (due to reduced pupil numbers) towards staffing and resourcing in order to achieve sustained improvements over the past year.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, agreed and signed off by the governing body. The single central register is well-maintained (providing an overview of the vetting arrangements for staff working at or regularly visiting the school). Staff and governors have regular update training in safeguarding, safer recruitment of staff and 'Prevent' duty training (to address the dangers of pupils being affected by radical influences). The procedures for referring pupils due to safeguarding concerns are robust and adhered to by staff. There is a named member of staff and governor for safeguarding. The premises are well secured, including the signing in and out procedures for school visitors.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Since the last inspection report, improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment were initially slow. Occasionally, teachers' questioning of pupils could go further to enable deeper learning. Sometimes, pupils' own questions could be further explored to encourage their research skills. The school recognises that further training is needed for staff in how to better identify the specific needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. This training will help to develop their skills in working productively with pupils and their families to improve pupils' attendance and engagement in learning.
- Teachers know their subjects well because they are either specialists or they benefit from continued professional development. They make effective use of their assessments of pupils' reading and spelling abilities to plan their lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely with pupils to agree learning and behaviour targets so that pupils then know what is expected of them in lessons.
- Teachers and support staff consistently promote good reading and spelling in other subjects, for example in science, where pupils recognise and understand particular terminology.
- Pupils spoken to say that they appreciate the feedback they receive from teachers about their work. The inspector found that teachers make consistent reference, in both key stage 3 and key stage 4, to the school's agreed policy on the marking of work and how to provide feedback. It is clear from pupils' books that the policy has been applied over a sustained period.
- Since the last inspection, teaching and support staff have established a greater emphasis on the importance of learning in both key stages. While there are occasional disruptions, these are calmly and skilfully managed by staff so that pupils return to their work. Teachers are skilled in how they group pupils, and teaching support staff are deployed well. As a result, the atmosphere in classrooms is generally very calm and enables learning to take place. There is increasing evidence of group discussions where pupils demonstrate the British values of tolerance and respect because they take turns and listen to each other or an adult. This was notable in all lessons observed.
- Teachers are skilled in explaining new concepts to pupils, for example the relevance of Roman numerals in today's world. They plan imaginative ways to introduce topics that motivate and engage pupils.
- Senior staff ensure that they check the quality of the alternative providers used by the school. The inspector was unable to arrange a visit to these providers. Through discussions with staff, pupils and reference to school records, it was clear that the quality of these providers is good. Pupils spoken to say that they enjoy practical, or 'hands-on', learning.
- Teachers say that they appreciate the opportunities provided by the headteacher and local authority to develop professionally. More recently, leaders and teachers have been able to conduct 'peer observations', which has led to a sharing of best practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. The very small amount of graffiti included a homophobic comment. The inspector found good evidence to indicate that staff follow up racist or homophobic incidents quickly and effectively. This has led to a sustained reduction in such incidents over the past year. Pupils take care of the school environment. There is no evidence of litter.

- Staff have established strong relationships with pupils who regularly attend the school. Pupils spoken to say they value these relationships because they are encouraged to become self-confident and independent young people. One or two pupils still find it difficult to fully engage in lessons so they miss out on these opportunities.
- In the lessons observed, pupils demonstrated growing confidence in their ability, for example, to read out aloud or to contribute to a class discussion. They take pride in their books and their presentation. While there were occasional inappropriate comments in a science lesson, pupils responded well to calm and sensitive adult support to then talk more sensibly about changes of the body during adolescence.
- Pupils spoken to state that because of their close bonds with staff they have become more able to hold eye contact and to talk about their feelings. As a result, they have become more calm and less frustrated or angry with life.
- During free time, pupils take responsibility to move around school safely. While there is a good level of staff supervision, it is clear that pupils are encouraged to be independent, for example, when they sit at a table together and socialise during lunchtime.
- Pupils spoken to say that they feel safe in school. They say that staff follow up any concerns. There has been a big decrease in serious incidents over the past year. The inspector saw no evidence of behaviour that might compromise pupils' or staff safety.
- The school's quality assurance of the off-site provision attended by older pupils indicates that pupils are kept safe and secure by skilled staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. There is a small group of pupils who are persistently absent from school, or who do not attend full lessons. They do not have the opportunities to develop positive behaviour in a school or classroom setting. Staff have had varied success in the impact they have had on these pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Pupils' conduct in and around school, and at off-site provision, is mostly good. They are well supervised and partake well in breaktime games and respond well to adult guidance, advice and instructions.
- Pupils spoken to in school do say that 'you can't get away with stuff now!' This is because the school's policy on behaviour very clearly focuses on 'respect'. There is also an emphasis on pupils making the correct choices based on their individual behaviour targets. They know that behaviour has consequences. They are keen to earn positive comments so that they benefit from reward time on a Friday. School records show that there has been a steady decrease in the number of pupils who do not achieve reward time.
- Pupils' behaviour observed in lessons was mostly good. Many pupils demonstrated good learning habits and responded quickly to sensitive adult advice, support and guidance. The few occasions when pupils became distracted from learning were short lived because of staff's consistent application of the school's behaviour policy.
- School records indicate a sustained decrease in fixed term exclusions, serious incidents and internal truancy, so leaders are now focusing their concerns on the small group of pupils who are persistently absent or whose full attendance and engagement in lessons is infrequent.
- Parents spoken to state that the school has been 'brilliant' in the way the staff have helped to improve their particular children's attendance and behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Overall academic outcomes for pupils require improvement. There are still a small number of pupils who do not move on to further education, employment or training.
- Pupils who attend school regularly make good or better progress from their starting points, especially in reading and spelling. Pupils who benefit from the pupil premium funding also make good progress in these areas.
- By the time they leave school, most pupils have achieved some form of external accreditation, and most go on to further education, employment or training. Some pupils achieve up to four GCSEs (including English and mathematics). Others gain vocational qualifications in a range of subjects that enable them to proceed into employment or apprenticeships.

- School leaders ensure that there are strong systems in place to check on pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. They also ensure, through pupil progress meetings, that information about pupils' progress in other subjects is regularly referred to when teachers plan their lessons. This practice is evident in pupils' books, which in turn are well-marked to give useful feedback to pupils, and which is positively followed up in many cases to show good progress, as required by the school's marking policy.
- In lessons observed by the inspector, pupils demonstrate that they read regularly for information and they are confident when reading out loud in class, for example when reading poetry in a key stage 3 lesson. Pupils make use of the school's library during free time. All pupils are encouraged to have an opinion and to contribute their ideas and their views, for example when discussing sexism in the context of a personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lesson about Walt Disney characters.
- The most-able pupils in key stage 3 have opportunities to extend their learning, for example, when using their mathematics skills to decode Roman numerals. At key stage 4, pupils draft and redraft their independent writing and make use of increasingly complex language. They ensure that their spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate because teachers point out any errors.
- The less able pupils respond well to focused support from teaching assistants so that they make progress from low starting points in their reading, spelling and numeracy skills. As a result, they are able to become more confident and independent in lessons. They also have the same opportunities and success rates as their peers in moving on to further education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	119866
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10012199

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dianne Hodgson
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Thompson
Telephone number	01772 774752
Website	www.moorbrook.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Email address	head@moorbrook.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 June 2014

Information about this school

- Moorbrook School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Currently, there are no girls attending. The school can provide for up to 46 pupils.
- A number of pupils have additional special educational needs, including specific learning difficulties and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Most pupils (above the national average) are eligible to support provided by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision on a full or part-time basis.
- Currently, the alternative providers include The Futures (Clitheroe), the Preston Vocational Centre, and Cast North West (Wigan). The school has also made use of 4Techmoto (Preston).
- The headteacher was appointed and a new senior leadership team was set up in the summer term of 2015.
- There have been a number of challenges for leaders and the governing body to manage over the past year. These include reduced pupil numbers, a reduction in staffing and staff absences.
- The school is currently receiving close support from the local authority advisory team as well as from the headteachers at two local special schools: Shaun Jukes at Sir Tom Finney Community High School and Jane Fallon at Brookfield Special School.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons across the school and in different subjects. The headteacher and an assistant headteacher completed joint observations with the inspector.
- The inspector made observations in and around the school, including break and lunchtime. He held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders about the school's work. The inspector met with a local authority senior adviser and four governors (including the chair of the governing body) to discuss school improvement issues.
- The inspector spoke over the telephone with two parents to gain their views about the school. There were insufficient responses to consider from Parent View (the online Ofsted questionnaire), although there was one text response.
- The inspector met formally and informally with small groups of pupils. Pupils were heard reading in lessons. There were no responses on the online pupil questionnaire.
- The inspector took account of responses from the online staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at a range of school documents including the school development plan; the school's document about how well the school is doing; safeguarding, behaviour and attendance policies and records; information about pupils' progress in their learning and policies relating to teaching and learning. Governing body documents and minutes of its meetings were also considered.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a senior adviser from the local authority.

Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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