

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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2 May 2018

Mrs S Murray  
Moston Fields Primary School  
Brookside Road  
Moston  
Manchester  
M40 9GJ

Dear Mrs Murray

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moston Fields Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 19 April 2018, 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 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the rate of persistent absence reduces for disadvantaged pupils
- embed and monitor the success of the new systems put in place to assess and track pupils' progress in a consistent manner so that performance rises to reflect that seen nationally
- develop further the role of the subject leader to support curriculum development and ensure that key skills are being taught progressively throughout the school.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, two deputy headteachers, the chair of the governing body and one other member of the governing body. I also met with members of your wider leadership team and spoke on the phone to your quality-assurance officer. During these meetings, we discussed the actions taken to address areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. You and I toured the school and its grounds. We visited classrooms to observe pupils at work. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and a broad range of other evidence, including performance data and your own records of monitoring teaching, learning and assessment. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and looked at work in books and evidence files. I also considered the school's most recent pupil performance data.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant change in the leadership of the school. You joined Moston Fields Primary School as headteacher in January 2017 and lost no time in appointing an experienced and committed senior leadership team. The school has been further enhanced with the appointment of other key staff, who bring enthusiasm and expertise to a range of areas. The governing body has been strengthened and is offering a greater degree of support and challenge. It has grown in strength over time, with individual governors now linked with key areas of development in the school, such as attendance, pupil progress and attainment. You have appointed several new teachers and a family liaison worker. They too are making a positive impact. You note with pride, 'Everybody is on the journey – we want the school to be what it should and could be.'

## **Main findings**

You are working in a systematic and decisive fashion to bring about school improvement. Governors and your quality-assurance officer speak highly of your determination and commitment. Your senior leadership team supports your vision and works effectively on key areas of school improvement. Leaders are aware that the school has been deemed to require improvement for some time, and you are working hard to ensure that systems are being put into place in a strategic manner. This is to ensure that the school has a secure foundation from which to grow and to address systematically the areas of pupil underperformance which still exist. With this in mind, you have created a detailed and evaluative development plan for the school which addresses the key areas for improvement.

You are passionate about the well-being of pupils, and this is reflected in your school aim to 'inspire children to become life-long learners in the classroom, in the

outdoor environment and within their community'. Optimum use is being made of outdoor areas to ensure that all pupils benefit from this learning environment. For example, pupils care for chickens, and you say that this creates 'awe and wonder'. Your gardener works with the pupils to develop an orchard and an allotment. Additionally, your site manager works with Year 6 pupils on 'life-skill challenges', such as designing and making bird houses. As a consequence, your pupils understand how these activities enhance their learning and promote well-being.

At the previous inspection, inspectors highlighted a need to reduce the unevenness in teaching, so that across groups of pupils gains in learning are stronger, particularly in writing and throughout the wider curriculum. You ensure that staff receive a broad range of training to develop the skills necessary to deepen pupils' knowledge across the curriculum. Opportunities to share experience within and beyond school have developed the confidence and skills of teachers. You have restructured the way in which learning is undertaken and moved teachers to new classes to capitalise on their strengths. As a consequence, leaders' monitoring shows that teachers' skills are improving and pupils' learning is becoming stronger, particularly in writing where progress is clearly evident in books.

You are developing your staff's knowledge and skills in teaching phonics. You have created a systematic approach which ensures that pupils' skills are developed well. Pupils are grouped to ensure high levels of understanding and engagement. Leaders have purchased new books for pupils to further develop their understanding of phonics. They make sure that these books are taken home, to give pupils further opportunities to practise the sounds that they learn in school. As a consequence of these measures, the number of pupils achieving the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check increased in 2017.

You have adopted a new system for assessment and tracking pupil progress. This allows staff to accurately monitor the progress of pupils in their class. As a consequence, the opportunities planned for all pupils now link closely to their identified strengths and areas of need. Leaders provide opportunities for teachers to moderate pieces of writing with colleagues from other schools, to further ensure the accuracy of assessment. You now have an assessment team which leads regular pupil progress meetings to ensure that staff are fully accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes. You acknowledge that this system is new and more time will be required to embed it further.

You are aware that throughout school the progress of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, has been below that seen nationally. Your new assessment system now allows leaders and teachers to identify these pupils more accurately and prepare work to meet their needs. This has led to raised expectations from both teachers and the assessment team. The most able pupils are provided with additional support to ensure that they are moving towards their targets. Teachers undertake effective training to ensure that they are able to construct tasks which have high levels of challenge within them. This is showing

signs of success. Your observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books show that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are beginning to make accelerated progress. In 2017, the school's performance information shows an increased level of attainment in mathematics and writing for the most able pupils in key stage 1. However, further work is required to improve the performance of the most able pupils throughout the school.

At the previous inspection, inspectors noted that leaders must ensure that staff absence does not have a negative impact on pupils' progress, particularly in the early years. You highlight that staff absence within the school is reducing greatly. Recruitment is effective, and leaders have high expectations when appointing new members of staff. Curriculum training allows staff to replace absent teachers where required. As a consequence, when absences do occur, learning is not hindered.

Leaders have ensured that the teaching of writing has been a focus throughout the school. A writing team has been developed and a consistent approach to the teaching of writing has been introduced. Teachers receive effective training in this area and are currently working alongside colleagues from other local schools in a writing project. As a consequence, there is clear progression in the teaching of this subject throughout the school, and pupils and staff report high levels of engagement in the subject. Focused writing activities and theme fortnights give opportunities for pupils to produce extended pieces of writing on a regular basis. Analysis of work in literacy books during the inspection demonstrated clear progress in pupils' writing skills throughout the school. Leaders note that staff enjoy teaching writing. They are aware that the application of writing skills across the curriculum now needs to be more closely monitored by subject leaders to ensure that writing skills are being further developed through other subjects.

At the previous inspection, inspectors highlighted the need to improve aspects of leadership and management. Since your appointment, you have begun to create strong leadership throughout the school. Leaders share your vision and drive for improvement. Their skills ensure that school improvement is developing at an increased pace. You have created phase leaders and subject leaders. These members of staff are developing their skills and beginning to take a greater role in areas of school improvement and subject development. We agreed that more time is required to enable these staff to develop their skills further, but you are justly proud of their commitment and engagement in their new role.

In 2017, you introduced a new curriculum structure that aims to give pupils the skills, knowledge and drive to succeed. Medium-term planning is now being developed and detailed schemes of work created. Your quality-assurance officer has highlighted the improvements in the breadth of the curriculum that the school now offers. Pupils spoken to during the inspection demonstrated a clear drive to succeed, which reflects the raised expectations across the school. One pupil, reflecting the views of others, noted, 'You have to work hard if you want a good job.' Another pupil noted, 'Ambition is the key to success.' While the new curriculum

structure offers pupils a broad range of opportunities to develop their skills and interests, you are aware that staff need further time to embed their planning to ensure that there is a progression of key skills throughout each year group in each subject.

You share information about the curriculum with parents and carers and provide them with workshops on aspects of learning, such as a family-learning workshop to explain the new curriculum structure. This is to ensure that they are positive partners in their children's learning. As a result, the number of parents attending school events is increasing and parental evaluations of training events are very positive. One parent, reflecting the views of others, noted, 'The new curriculum is engaging and is a talking point at home.'

You work with other leaders, including governors, to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and on time. You are aware that, historically, there was not a consistent system to manage attendance. This is not the case now. You have appointed a panel of leaders, including your newly appointed family liaison officer, which analyses attendance and addresses absence immediately. The panel works closely with families to offer support and guidance. Pupils are offered a wide range of incentives to attend school regularly and greatly appreciate the rewards they receive. Teachers discuss attendance with parents and carers at parent evenings. Pupils spoken to during the inspection understood the need for good attendance and punctuality. As a consequence, attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, persistent absence of those pupils who are disadvantaged remains high and leaders agree that further work is required to address this.

### **External support**

You receive effective support from your quality-assurance officer. He knows the school well and works in a positive and effective manner with leaders, including governors. You are building strong links with local primary schools and receive support in areas such as attendance, the moderation of writing and development of aspects of outdoor learning. Additional external support in developing the areas identified as action points within this letter should be considered by leaders, including governors.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard

**Her Majesty's Inspector**