

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 February 2019

Mrs Michelle Farr
Executive Headteacher
Forest Moor School
Menwith Hill Road
Darley
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG3 2RA

Dear Mrs Farr

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Forest Moor School

Following my visit to your school on 14 January 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection 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 the interim executive board are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that systems to monitor the quality of teaching, together with any associated training, have a positive impact on the overall quality of provision
- urgently improve the behaviour of pupils in the secondary phase, including their level of focus in lessons
- develop accurate systems for checking the progress and attainment of pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, in addition to other senior and middle leaders. I met with the head of inclusion, the head of learning support and the key stage 2 leader. I spoke with the chair of the interim executive board (IEB). I also met with two officers from the local authority, one of whom is a member of the IEB. Specific meetings were held to discuss how the role of middle leaders has been developed, and how leaders at all levels ensure that the quality of education on offer is strong. A meeting was held to check on the effectiveness of links between the school and the alternative provision that pupils attend. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including: the school's view of its own performance; monitoring records; information about pupils' progress; and the school improvement plan. I observed learning in classrooms, with the deputy headteacher, in both the primary and secondary phase.

Context

There have been major changes to the leadership of the school since the last inspection. The school is currently being led by an interim executive headteacher and a deputy headteacher. There was no substantive headteacher in post at the time of this monitoring inspection. The senior leadership team now also includes the special educational needs coordinator, the head of pastoral care, and the key stage 2 leader. The local authority has replaced the governing body with an IEB. Some of these changes are recent. The IEB has been in operation since September 2018, and the interim executive headteacher has been in post from the beginning of January 2019.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, action has not been sufficiently swift to establish effective leadership and governance. As a result, too much time has been spent dealing with daily operational pressures rather than improving the quality of education. The turbulence in leadership and lack of vision have led to a decline in standards in some areas of the school, specifically in the secondary phase. Here, pupils' behaviour and their level of focus are too variable. The quality of teaching in the secondary phase has been weak at times since the previous inspection. This has led to a situation where pupils' behaviour is currently too erratic and has not always been safe.

It is only very recently that stable and effective leadership has been established. In September, the IEB took over governance of the school. Members of the board are skilled professionals who understand the context of the school and its improvement priorities. Minutes of meetings show that the IEB is focused on improving the school and is tenacious in doing so. Some green shoots can be seen. However, due to the lack of progress since the last inspection, I do not judge that effective action has been taken to tackle the areas requiring improvement in order for the school to

become good.

There are some strengths within the school. Where learning is stronger, relationships between pupils and adults are based on respect. Pupils focus on the task in hand and try hard. Resources are put to good use, and teachers present new information with an enthusiasm that sparks an interest among the pupils. Pupils' work is routinely celebrated and the working environment is conducive to learning. These strengths are more often seen in the primary phase of the school.

However, sometimes pupils' behaviour is not good enough and their concentration wanes too quickly in lessons. Turbulence in staffing and planning that does not effectively address the learning and pastoral needs of the pupils is leading to a situation where some classrooms are not calm. This is often the case in the secondary phase of the school.

There are some recent signs of improvement. The executive headteacher has quickly identified where changes need to be made. New classes have been arranged for pupils in Years 7 and 8 to build on some of the strengths seen in the primary phase. Here, pupils are based with their form teacher for a greater proportion of their time at school. There is a focus on building strong working relationships. Some newer teachers to the school are making a flying start and their classrooms are calm and well-ordered places to learn. The executive headteacher is aware that there is a need to ensure that the processes in place to check the quality of teaching lead to a positive impact on the rate of pupils' learning.

Members of staff work hard to support individual pupils to help them regulate their emotions and behaviours. A variety of therapies are on offer and these have an increasingly positive impact on pupils. 'Learning support', a space where pupils receive immediate help, should they be in crisis or need to refocus their minds, ensures that pupils return to lessons ready to learn. Nonetheless, overall, behaviour in the secondary phase is not always well managed.

Over time, school leaders have been focused on the day-to-day management of the school. Their attention has not been on the improvements that were deemed necessary at the previous inspection. Pupils in the secondary phase still need to improve the standard of their written work and most-able pupils still do not make strong-enough progress. There is not an accurate system for checking the standards at which pupils are working and the progress that they are making. This limits the ability of teachers and other members of staff to plan work that effectively meets the needs of individual pupils.

The chair of the IEB, the executive headteacher and members of the leadership team are aware of the current position of the school. Plans that are in place are focused on the correct areas of school life. There is little impact so far, however, as the roll out of these plans is in its infancy. The executive headteacher has a track record of school improvement. School leaders are aware that assessment systems,

the quality of teaching, and the standards of behaviour in the secondary phase have slipped since the last inspection.

External support

The local authority has supported and challenged school leaders and those responsible for governance since the previous inspection. Colleagues from the local authority have worked in the school to provide additional capacity for leaders at times since July 2017. They have given helpful advice for issues surrounding the teaching of mathematics and the effectiveness of safeguarding processes. More recently, working in tandem with the IEB, the support offered has been primarily strategic in nature, assisting the executive headteacher.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector