



16 June 2005

Mr C Mills
Headteacher
Moorside High School
East Lancashire Road
Swinton
Manchester M27 0BH

Dear Mr Mills

Implementation of Moorside High School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Ms C Kirby HMI, Mr A Bennett HMI, Mr P Davies, Additional Inspector and Dr V Davis, Additional Inspector to your school on 6 and 7 June 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made limited progress since the last monitoring inspection and limited progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Leisure for Salford. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF MOORSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 46 lessons or parts of lessons, three registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, the senior leadership team, a group of middle managers and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the senior leadership team, the chair of the governing body and two representatives from the LEA.

Standards in lessons varied widely, but overall they were broadly in line with those expected nationally. However, too many pupils underachieved because the work they were set was not challenging enough; this is a similar picture to that found on the previous visit.

The quality of teaching and learning has declined since the previous visit; and the proportion that is good or better remains far too low if standards of attainment are to be improved rapidly. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 31 lessons; in 12 of these it was good and in three it was very good. The most successful lessons were characterised by planning that linked clear learning objectives with assessment opportunities; content that was appropriate to the needs of different pupils; a variety of clearly explained and challenging tasks; well-produced, interesting text-based resources; and the effective use of interactive whiteboards. In the very best lessons, good questioning took pupils beyond what they already knew, helping them apply their learning to new situations. However, too much teaching, even when broadly satisfactory, was mundane and sometimes lethargic. Lesson plans seldom acknowledged that pupils have different needs; they made few references to target levels of performance, so that there was little against which to judge the overall progress made by the pupils. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons were often rushed or lacked focus, either because learning objectives for the lesson were insufficiently precise or because teachers lacked the questioning skills to probe the pupils' understanding. In the unsatisfactory lessons, behaviour management was inadequate and teachers made too few demands of themselves or their pupils, accepting poorly presented work, including their own worksheets, without apparent demur.

The pupils made satisfactory or better progress in 28 lessons; progress was good in ten lessons and very good in three. In the good and very good lessons, the quality of the pupils' learning was underpinned by their enthusiastic response and

sustained engagement. Pupils often make less progress than they should because not enough of the teaching is sufficiently energetic to motivate those reluctant to participate fully in their learning. The pace of many lessons was no more than adequate. Teachers frequently allowed pupils to set their own rate of work, often interspersed with social chatter; this slowed their progress.

The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is improving but remains unsatisfactory overall. Individual education plans are used well in some lessons, where the subject teacher and the teaching assistant have been able to share lesson planning. However, in too many lessons, although the pupils with special educational needs are identified in the planning, their progress is limited by whole-class activities, which are not appropriately matched to their specific learning needs. A number of the pupils' individual plans have not been updated since September 2004; consequently the teachers do not have an accurate record of the pupils' progress and managers are unable to ascertain whether interventions have been effective. The special educational needs co-ordinator has established some useful links with individual teachers, for example, in mathematics where this work has raised the teachers' awareness of how they might best meet the pupils' different needs. However, the management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is underdeveloped.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in 37 of the 46 lessons: they were good in 14 lessons. In the best lessons, the pupils worked independently on tasks when required; showed initiative; and sustained concentration in response to challenge. The pupils' behaviour is generally more positive than their attitudes. Often, attitudes to learning were less than satisfactory; the pupils were too complacent because of low expectations and activities which failed to engage or sustain their attention. Punctuality to lessons is too variable, and is unsatisfactory overall.

Behaviour around the school was satisfactory overall, although there were occasional instances of over-boisterousness, the use of foul language and smoking. The pupils responded co-operatively to adult supervision out of lessons.

Attendance is unsatisfactory. At 87 per cent so far this school year, the attendance rate is well below the national figure for all schools and below the LEA target of 91 per cent. Attendance for Year 7-10 pupils on the first inspection day was only 78 per cent; it was 83 per cent in the lessons observed during this visit. The school lacks an effective policy to guide improvements in attendance and related issues. Although persistent non-attendance has been identified, work to address the causes has not resulted in significant improvement. Attendance data are not analysed systematically and procedures for improving the pupils' attendance are not having the desired impact.

There have been around 110 fixed-term exclusions since the start of the current school year. Although there are signs of a downward trend in the fixed-term exclusions over the past four months, the figure remains too high. The introduction of the check point internal withdrawal unit has the potential to further reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions, but its impact is not being monitored sufficiently rigorously. The effectiveness of sending disruptive pupils to other lessons is having a negative impact on the receiving class in some cases.

The headteacher has not secured a sufficiently rapid improvement in key areas of the school's work since the last monitoring visit. Although the senior leadership team's roles and responsibilities have been reorganised, their work has not yielded substantial progress. There is a lack of clarity in the management of actions to address each of the key issues; this is slowing the pace of improvement. Performance management has been introduced but has not achieved consistency in implementing strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, address underachievement and raise attainment, manage unsatisfactory behaviour and improve attendance. Senior managers are not being held to account with sufficient rigour.

The middle managers have responded positively to the senior managers' raised expectations of their role in monitoring the quality of work within faculties. The support given to middle managers, to enable them to carry out this role, varies in its effectiveness and has not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The minutes of meetings at all levels show that actions are not being tracked systematically or with sufficient urgency to bring about rapid improvement. The evaluation of the impact of actions is underdeveloped; consequently, the school has an over-generous view of its progress.

The governors remain committed to the school. The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school and is continuing to develop more formal links between individual governors and faculties. All governors have received recent training on what constitutes good teaching and learning and the chair of governors reports that this has been helpful.

The LEA continues to provide extensive, targeted support for the school but has not evaluated the effectiveness of the support it is providing.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: develop effective strategies to address underachievement

Information relating to the pupils' prior attainment, their attainment targets and special educational needs has been circulated to all staff. While some teachers are able to use this information productively, many require additional guidance on how to use it effectively to inform their planning and teaching. It is not clear who is responsible for ensuring this happens. The expectation by senior managers that key assessments are written into schemes of work has not been met in all subjects. A nationally recognised electronic system for managing assessment data has been purchased and work is underway to establish this system across the school.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 2: improve the quality of teaching and learning

The coaching programme has been extended to include staff identified as having the potential to become good teachers; however, other staff, who would benefit from the coaching, are not included in the programme. Written records of observations are sometimes generalised and fail to identify specific points for improvement or suggested ways to achieve them; inconsistencies in basic classroom routines continue to undermine the development of a more secure learning culture. Lesson plans are checked more frequently by heads of faculty. Senior managers' views of the quality of teaching are over-optimistic; middle managers recognise many shortcomings in teaching but are only beginning to model what is required. The quality of the pupils' learning, and hence the progress they make, is limited by too much teaching that fails to capture their interest. The use of homework to reinforce learning is inconsistent.

Progress is limited.

Key Issue 3: improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels

Despite the considerable efforts of managers to bring about improvement, leadership has not been sufficiently focused on key priorities; consequently the school's progress remains too slow.

Progress is limited.

Key Issue 4: improve the accommodation and resources

The programme of refurbishment and redecoration is now almost complete. The learning environment in non-specialist classrooms, corridors and communal areas is generally of a good standard. However, a lack of resources and unsatisfactory accommodation remains in some teaching areas; for example, in science and is adversely affecting the pupils' progress. The absence of blinds in science laboratories constitutes a health and safety hazard. Although the school anticipates a new building programme to be agreed in 2008, for completion in 2013, this is too far in the future to address the current deficiencies, which result mainly from previous under-investment in accommodation, maintenance and resource provision. The school has not established a central resource base or published a full inventory of resources.

Interactive whiteboards and data projectors have been installed in a number of teaching rooms, where they are beginning to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The computer network has been upgraded substantially. Recent refurbishment of the library, and a significant financial investment in new books, is an improvement. However, the school does not have a clear policy for managing learning resources to support the pupils' independent learning.

Progress is reasonable.