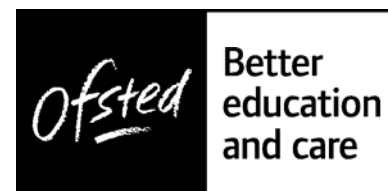


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## POST-VISIT LETTER

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

23 November 2005

Dear Mr Mills

### **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MOORSIDE HIGH SCHOOL**

#### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Mrs M Cordey Additional Inspector, Mr R Parker Additional Inspector and Mr Bernard Treacy Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 November, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other key managers, a group of teachers, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and representatives from the local authority.

## **Context**

Sixteen new staff joined the school in September 2005. Since the last monitoring visit a deputy headteacher has left the school and has not been replaced. New appointments have been made to the following posts: four head of faculty, three head of department and three second in department. A consultant manager has joined the school in a temporary capacity to support the senior leadership team.

## **Achievement and standards**

Provisional results for the 2005 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3 show standards overall remain broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress. At Key Stage 4 standards in 2003 and 2004 were well below average and pupils made insufficient progress. Provisional results for 2005 show a significant improvement. The proportion of pupils achieving five A\* to C grades at GCSE rose from 37% to 47%, although standards remain below the national average overall and attainment varies significantly between subjects. In English pupils make good progress; standards are well above average, so too is the proportion of pupils achieving A\* or A grades. In science and mathematics the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades has improved considerably, although standards remain below average. Overall, pupils do not progress as well as they should in Key Stage 4, based on their attainment in the earlier key stages. Their progress is variable across the range of subjects offered at GCSE and pockets of underachievement persist. The school has produced a comprehensive analysis of results, is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and has implemented strategies to address the marked variability in standards between subjects. A number of these are in the early stages and it is too soon to gauge their impact.

Standards in lessons have improved since the last monitoring visit. However, a greater proportion of the teaching needs to be good if pupils are to make better than satisfactory progress in lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2004:

- Develop effective strategies to address underachievement – satisfactory progress

## **Personal development and well-being**

Attendance since September is broadly in line with the national average. This represents a considerable improvement compared to the previous year. New monitoring systems, which involve increased contact with parents, are implemented rigorously. Pupils generally enjoy coming to school and feel an increased confidence in the quality of the education they are receiving. They appreciate the improved quality of the teaching and feel that expectations have been raised throughout the school. Behaviour has improved in the classroom, where the emphasis is now upon teaching and learning and much less effort needs to be devoted to keeping order.

Behaviour around the school is satisfactory, although there are instances of inconsiderate jostling in the corridors, pupils occasionally smoking in the yard and some bad language. Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has also improved and is satisfactory, though the school recognises the need to build further upon initiatives that have recently been introduced. The number of fixed-term exclusions so far this term, compared to the corresponding period in 2004, has increased and so remains high. However, the number of days for which pupils have been excluded has decreased, as a consequence of the introduction of mediation to resolve differences and the use of 'seclusion' as a means of internal exclusion.

## **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the previous monitoring visit. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 34 out of the 41 lessons seen. It was good in 12 lessons, but there was no outstanding teaching. The proportion of teaching which is good or better is not high enough to secure the consistently good progress required to raise standards rapidly in some subjects and increase the proportion of pupils achieving higher grades.

In the most successful lessons pupils are enthusiastic, curious and highly motivated because teachers maintain a brisk pace, and set tight timescales for tasks which are varied and challenging. In some lessons electronic whiteboards are used well to involve pupils and to speed up routine activities. Perceptive questioning quickly identifies misconceptions, and challenges the most able pupils to be reflective or analytical. Teachers also heighten the sense of urgency by linking current standards of work with pupils' target grades so that they are quickly aware of any underachievement. Where learning is less successful these stimulating techniques are not exploited to the same extent. Teachers manage behaviour effectively, but pupils are passive and lack enthusiasm. Some are bored. Others chat casually, seemingly unaware that this is detracting from their progress. Some of the weaknesses arise from good intentions, as teachers work to maintain a rapid pace but give too little time for pupils to reflect and consolidate their understanding, or to record what they have learned. In some lessons the most able pupils are not challenged to think more critically about what they are doing, and higher level tasks are set as something for pupils to do when they have finished the mundane work. Consequently more able pupils do not routinely benefit from the challenge necessary to enable them to achieve the highest grades.

Assessment systems have become sharper. Formal half-termly assessment provides teachers and pupils with information on progress. This is being used by curriculum managers to identify underachievement and to target support. However, it is not used consistently to plan lessons which adequately challenge and meet the needs of all learners. The quality of marking is variable. Some departments use marking well to inform pupils of their progress and what they need to do to improve their work; in others marking is cursory and unhelpful.

There has been a significant shift in attitudes towards teaching and learning in the school. The emphasis is now clearly on learning. Many teachers are keenly aware of the impact of their work and evaluate their own and each other's lessons to see whether the range of activities provided is giving pupils the best opportunities to learn. They are willing to acknowledge weaknesses, but at the same time they are becoming more aware of their strengths. Senior and middle managers have worked well together to provide carefully planned support. This ranges from a widely publicised programme of lesson observations to an innovative in-school magazine giving hints on effective teaching techniques. Pupils say that, as a result, teachers are more enthusiastic. Teachers say that the school is a better place to be.

The broad and balanced curriculum is enriched by a range of extracurricular activities that are well attended. An additional English period timetabled in Years 10 and 11 has allowed the school to provide media studies in addition to English and English literature. The introduction of vocational courses is a welcome move to better meet the needs of pupils in Key Stage 4. However, quality assurance systems are insufficiently robust to monitor progress on programmes which are taught off-site in collaboration with other institutions.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the management of this provision have improved. Individual education plans have been updated and teachers have been provided with substantial guidance and training on how best to support the pupils identified. However, practice is inconsistent, and in some instances limited account is taken of particular needs even though they have been identified in the lesson plan.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2004:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – good progress

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has worked to good effect since the last monitoring visit to address the weaknesses identified in leadership and management at all levels. He has been more robust in challenging persistent unsatisfactory performance; a number of staff have since left the school. His lead has given a stronger focus and a sense of urgency to improving teaching and learning and to raising standards. The impact of this work is reflected in the considerable progress the school has made since June in addressing the key issues identified in the inspection report of March 2004. The school's evaluation shows the headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Actions planned to improve provision are appropriate although it is too early to gauge the impact of a number of the more recent initiatives. Following a lengthy period of instability the school is now more settled and staffing is secure. Sixteen new staff joined the school in September; this has provided managers with a stable platform from which to build further improvement.

Roles and responsibilities in the senior leadership team have been realigned and clarified through new job descriptions. Increased accountability, tempered with appropriate guidance and support, has improved the capacity to effect change. An interim manager, seconded to the school by the local authority, is supporting members of the senior team as they continue to develop their leadership skills. Senior managers are becoming more confident and this has helped to secure a change of culture in the school. Middle management has been strengthened by new appointments which have increased and the capacity to drive improvement from within faculties and subject areas. Systems to monitor the progress of actions and to gauge their impact have become more rigorous; an annual calendar of monitoring activities has been shared with all staff and is displayed prominently in communal areas. This is helping managers at all levels to develop a realistic view of what is working well and equally where strategies are not having the intended effect on provision.

The chair of governors initiated the discussion needed at senior management level to clarify roles and responsibilities and produce the annual monitoring calendar. Working alongside the headteacher, he has been responsible for encouraging greater parental involvement in the school. Governors have improved the rigour with which they hold the school to account for its progress against the key issues.

The planned programme of refurbishment is almost complete and additional work is under way to address deficiencies in accommodation and resources that were too important to leave for the building programme proposed for 2008. Interactive whiteboards and data projectors have been installed in most classrooms although there is scope to further develop their use. Inadequate resources and accommodation in science have been largely resolved and improvements will be completed by 2006. The provision of books and computer technology in the learning resource centre is improved. However, the centre is too often used as an extra teaching room due to lack of space; this reduces the impact of the extra resources especially in terms of improving the pupils' independent learning. Clear, focused management of school maintenance has resulted in a cleaner and more pleasant environment. The school has still not published a full inventory of resources.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2004:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels – good progress
- Improve the accommodation and resources – satisfactory progress

### **External support**

The local authority has provided a comprehensive range of support through consultants and advisers. The impact of this work is evident in the improvements seen in the quality of teaching. Support strategies to further develop the capacity at senior management level are well considered. The chair of governors has welcomed

the appointment of additional local authority governors. Records of the local authority's support visits would benefit from agreed timescales against actions to sharpen the monitoring process. Recent work funded through the Leadership Incentive Grant has established productive links with leading edge schools; this has enabled key staff to develop their management potential by observing good practice elsewhere.

## **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualification: discussion with the lead monitoring inspector prior to interview.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better.
- Improve systems for tracking the progress of pupils enrolled on vocational programmes delivered off-site.
- Provide more challenge to higher attaining pupils by raising expectations.
- Improve the quality of marking so that pupils are clear what they need to do to improve their work in all subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Leisure for Salford.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Kirby  
**H M Inspector**