



Moorbrook School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119866
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291554
Inspection date 5 February 2007
Reporting inspector John Atkinson

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Ainslie Road
School category	Community special		Preston, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	11-16		PR2 3DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01772 774752
Number on roll (school)	37	Fax number	01772 713256
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs E D Hodgson
		Headteacher	Mr G Torbett
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Moorbrook is a community school for secondary age students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational need. The school serves a wide geographical area and many students travel a long distance. There are no students whose first language is not English. There are three looked after students. The percentage of students who qualify for free school meals is well above average. In early 2004, the school was categorised as having serious personnel and educational difficulties by the local authority. Since then the school has experienced a significant level of turbulence with many changes in staff and a high level of staff absence.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13 of the Education Act 2005 HMCI is of the opinion that the school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvements are required in relation to students' behaviour and attendance and in the curriculum provided by the school.

The school is improving but the inspector judges the overall effectiveness and its value for money to be inadequate. The school has encountered significant difficulties in the past three years resulting in many staff changes and a lack of stability. Throughout this difficult period, the headteacher has nurtured a small team of permanent staff effectively by introducing into the school a clear code of professional conduct. As a result, these members of staff work well as a team in striving to create an ethos that is conducive to learning. They are beginning to build good relationships with students and offer generous levels of care and support. This is beginning to create a more positive climate in school, although progress is slow. However, the relatively new staff team have limited experience and expertise in dealing with the challenging behaviour and complex emotional difficulties that many students present. The outcome is that students' behaviour is poor and often volatile leading to a high level of fixed term exclusions. Although new procedures have been introduced to tackle poor behaviour, there is insufficient impact on making students aware of the consequences of their behaviour and the need to modify it. Attendance is inadequate and a major barrier to improving students' achievement. Poor behaviour and attendance adversely affect the rate of students' personal development and limit the positive experiences and contributions they encounter. The small size of the staff team means that the curriculum is inadequate because it lacks breadth and balance and is not sufficiently tailored to meet the individual needs of very challenging students. The problems of behaviour, attendance and the curriculum have been considerably exacerbated by staff absences and the investigations of the local authority into the long-term problems of the school.

Despite the many challenges facing the school, it does provide an acceptable standard of education. Students' academic achievements and vocational experiences have a positive impact on their economic well being, leading to successful outcomes in terms of employment, training and suitable courses. Despite satisfactory teaching, pupils' achievement is inadequate overall, especially in Key Stage 3. In science, mathematics and physical education the progress is good because the permanent staff have high expectations, the learning is well planned and the students' enjoyment of learning significantly reduces the incidences of poor behaviour. The school is making inroads into improving students' attitudes towards healthy living by getting students involved in sport, improving students' understanding of a good diet through cookery lessons and implementing a smoking reduction programme.

The headteacher and the newly appointed deputy headteacher are forging a team of staff with the commitment and enthusiasm to turn the school around. There is a clear development plan for 2006/2007 that identifies what the school needs to do to improve

students' personal development and raise achievement through a more personalised approach to the curriculum. The resolute approach of the headteacher combined with the quality of permanent staff and the support of the local authority mean that the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' behaviour in and around the school.
- Increase the students' levels of attendance.
- Provide a broad, balanced and more personal curriculum.
- Provide staff training in behaviour management.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Students, including the small minority of girls, make satisfactory progress in lessons, however, their achievement over time is inadequate. This is because students' poor behaviour is a significant barrier to the rate of progress they make, more so in Key Stage 3. Attainment on entry is usually low and often very low because students' social, emotional and behavioural difficulties have interfered with their previous learning. Increasingly, many students are also showing a greater than usual degree of emotional disturbance with an impact on learning difficulty. Despite all this, the school helps students to make satisfactory progress in those subjects where there are permanent teachers. Students who left at the end of Year 11 in 2006 achieved a number of GCSE passes in English, mathematics, science and art and design. Two students gained a 'C' grade in mathematics. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in their work-related experiences because they rise to the expectations of such placements and behave in a more mature and sensible manner.

Most students in Key Stage 3 achieve satisfactorily, but some underachieve. This is the period when their personal difficulties are most pronounced and effective behaviour management strategies are crucial to their progress in lessons. Tests at the end of Year 9 show that students attained a standard that is well below the national average. In Year 7, students struggle to adapt to the change from a primary style of class teaching to a secondary one with several teachers and their poor behaviour can have an adverse effect on their progress. Students make good progress in physical education where they behave well and apply themselves with energy and enthusiasm.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Students' personal development and well-being are inadequate. So is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is frequently unsettled because many individuals are volatile, confrontational and exhibit outbursts of unpleasant behaviour resulting in disruption to their learning and the amount of time they are in school. There was a very high rate of exclusions in 2005/2006, nearly all for short

periods, although in 2006/2007 the number of exclusions is showing a reduction and reflects the school's determination to be more consistent in tackling poor behaviour. Attendance is inadequate. A small core of students have poor attendance: fifteen with an attendance rate of less than eighty percent. Several students talked confidently and politely to the inspector, expressing the view that the school was helping them to be better behaved. A minority of older students are showing a mature approach to their problems by participating successfully in work experience. Most students show a satisfactory awareness of safety but irrational behaviour occasionally puts others at risk. Students meet with success in developing healthier lifestyles, many enjoy their physical activities and the smoking reduction programme is having a limited, but welcome, impact. Students particularly enjoy cookery lessons where they are introduced to healthy approaches to eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall teaching is satisfactory and helps students to make satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers are well prepared and teamwork between classroom staff is well organised and an emerging strength of the school. Where expectations are high for both learning and behaviour, students make the most progress. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to supporting students in their learning and behaviour but all too often they are dealing with outbursts of excessive behaviour when students react aggressively to reasonable requests from staff. Classrooms can easily become unsettled because staff have limited expertise in preventing confrontational and aggressive behaviour; as a result, the pace of learning is disrupted. Students who are struggling to behave are frequently removed from class or remove themselves from class. Teachers are beginning to use a reward and sanction system more consistently so that the interruptions are reduced and the majority of students can carry on with their work undisturbed. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to present work in a way which captures and keeps the attention of students. Relationships between staff and students are increasingly being built upon trust and appreciation of the support given to those with very challenging behaviours. The evidence of inspection supports the school's view that teaching is satisfactory and a reason why the school has the capacity to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. It does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum because music is not taught. The curriculum is restricted by the staffing problems that the school has faced for the past three years. The curriculum promotes basic skills in English and mathematics and balances this with science, physical education and art. A small number of subjects are offered at GCSE. Most older students have a work experience placement but students have limited opportunities to attend

college to study subjects that would meet their personal needs more effectively. There are not enough enrichment activities for students to develop individual interests and talents. The distances students have to travel to school each day curtails after-school activities and there are few educational visits or visitors. The school has identified the importance of resolving the outstanding issues in relation to staffing so that a more varied and appropriate curriculum is made available.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support of students are satisfactory. Staff are highly committed to ensuring that students stay safe and are well looked after and share a good awareness of the importance of protecting students, even from their own self-destructive behaviour. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and up to date. The school tries hard, but does not always succeed, in engaging parents in their children's education. It works well with other support agencies and does its best to improve the care and support of students. Teachers have a good understanding of students' learning, behavioural and emotional problems. They adapt work for individuals to ensure that all have equal opportunities to make progress. Assessment is wide ranging and frequent and is improving the clarity of the picture of students' progress as they pass through the school. The school is developing a system to show where students are expected to get to each year in different subjects and students are given appropriate guidance as how to reach their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The fact that the leadership and management of the headteacher has kept a troubled school and fragile staff going is a tribute to his determination to put children first and provide a quality of education that they deserve. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher has provided the headteacher with much needed support. The leadership and behaviour management skills of many staff are underdeveloped and are reasons for the slow rate of progress in the school's improvement. The governing body has supported the school through a very difficult period and needs to take a more direct role in monitoring the work of the school so that there is a very clear and shared vision for the school.

There has been inadequate improvement since the previous inspection because of the massive problems in the school identified following the local authority's intervention into the running of the school. This intervention resulted in many staffing changes at all levels. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve because of the commitment of the permanent staff who are being supported by the local authority. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. It is sometimes over-optimistic but very clear about what the priorities are.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The behaviour of learners	4
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Moorbrook School

Ainslie Road

Preston

Lancashire

PR2 3DB

05 February 2007

Dear Students

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views when I came to visit your school. I appreciated the time you gave to talking to me about the school. There are a number of things I like about your school

- The staff care about you and are very patient with you, even when you are angry and aggressive.
- Some of you have enjoyable work experiences that will help you in the future.
- You have many opportunities to develop a healthier lifestyle.
- Some of you are doing well and will achieve grades in your exams.

My main finding is that the school needs to improve and you have a part to play in that. Your behaviour and attendance need to improve if you are to develop the personal skills that will give you a chance to do well when you leave. The school will try to make this happen by improving how they deal with your behaviour and offering you a more interesting and appropriate curriculum.

You have some very committed and enthusiastic staff who are determined to help you. You can help them by thinking much more about the consequences of your behaviour and trying to be more self-restrained.

Another inspector will come back to check that the school is improving. I wish you well for the future and hope that you get the best out of what the school is trying to do for you.

Yours sincerely

John Atkinson

Lead inspector