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Mr Graham Torbett
Headteacher
Moorbrook School
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Dear Mr Torbett

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you gave when I inspected your school on 25 February, and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please, also, convey my thanks to the pupils, the staff, the chair of governors and the local authority adviser for their assistance.

Since the previous inspection, two middle managers have been appointed, responsible for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and three teaching assistants have been appointed to replace those who left.

As a result of the inspection in February 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the use of preventative strategies to reduce the use of fixed term exclusions
- make more consistent use of assessment systems to further develop individualised approaches to planning lessons
- ensure that all of the available lesson time is used to promote pupils' progress in their learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Examination results in the summer of 2009 showed that those pupils who attended regularly made satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. The school has extended the range of qualifications available, thus enabling pupils to achieve

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accreditation in a greater number of subjects and at different levels according to their ability. The modular approach used on some courses helps to alleviate some of the pressure pupils feel when faced with examination conditions and motivates them to continue because of their interim achievements. However, some pupils still do not achieve as well as they are capable, usually because of falling attendance in the final year of school or social difficulties outside of school.

The school has achieved a significant reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions. The structure of the school day has been revised to increase the amount of time available for learning and to minimise opportunities for disruption on the corridors, such as between lessons. A system for 'time out', called 'comps', has been introduced which has reduced the need for external exclusions. However, sometimes only half of the pupils in a group are actually in their normal lessons because they are being supervised until they are calm enough to return to lessons or until they complete unfinished work. The Year 7 group is taking longer than expected to settle into school and to accept routines and boundaries.

Teachers are making better use of available lesson time. They achieve this by having higher expectations of learning and behaviour. Also, they now ensure that lessons start promptly and continue at a good pace. Teachers continue to make good use of visual resources and practical activities which capture pupils' interest and imagination. They make learning relevant to pupils' everyday lives and use humour very effectively to reduce anxiety. Pupils' efforts and contributions are highly valued, with a clear respect for promoting self-esteem. Teaching assistants provide good guidance and support, helping to maintain pupils' concentration and develop their understanding. The pupils said they value the extra individual tuition they receive, for example at break times.

Assessment for learning is improving. As a result, teachers have a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and abilities, but the expected learning outcomes for each pupil are not made clear in teachers' planning. Teachers now routinely assess learning against general lesson objectives, make reference to individual behaviour targets, and provide immediate feedback which motivates pupils to try harder. The pupils respond positively when they are asked to assess their own learning and that of their peers. Teachers track pupils' learning against National Curriculum levels in all subjects and the data are being collated to enable the school to evaluate progress over time.

The local authority has been very effective in guiding and supporting the school since the last inspection. Training has focused on promoting a better understanding of pupils' complex needs and strategies to manage incidents of challenging behaviour. Issues of safeguarding have been addressed and the pupils say the school is a safe place to be, although some of the older pupils are concerned about the disruptive behaviour of the younger ones. Pupils, staff and governors speak with certainty about the significant improvements seen since the last inspection and the higher aspirations for pupils' academic achievements. The headteacher has a

generally accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and the schools' priorities for improvement. Senior and middle leaders are developing a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the steps needed to bring about improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Broomhead
Her Majesty's Inspector