

Moorbrook School

Ainslie Road, Fulwood, Preston, Lancashire PR2 3DB

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a good school. School leaders and governors are highly ambitious. They have succeeded in changing the school's culture so that the required improvements can take place.
- Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. Their collective actions are improving the school rapidly. Leaders know the school well and have selected the right priorities for improvement.
- Governors are highly effective. Their combined knowledge and expertise have had a positive impact on the school. They have supported leaders as well as holding them to account, leading to better provision and outcomes for pupils.
- The overwhelming majority of staff, pupils, parents and carers say that they have confidence that school leaders will build on the improvements made.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, but recognise that there is more to do to make this an outstanding school. For example, teaching assistants give some pupils too much support as they complete their work. As a result, these pupils do not reach their full potential as learners.
- Pupils benefit from well-balanced and personalised education. Carefully selected alternative educational placements successfully complement pupils' learning and progress in school-based subjects.
- Good relationships between adults and pupils enable pupils to grow in self-esteem, confidence and their ability to interact with others.
- Pupils achieve well in school. They make good progress from their starting points and, in most areas, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. However, some pupils do not receive the level of independent careers advice that they are entitled to.
- Most pupils behave well and rates of fixed-term exclusions have fallen dramatically since the last inspection. Despite the school's best efforts, pupils' attendance rates have improved at a slower rate.
- The school provides a secure setting where pupils feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding and pupils' welfare are effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by building on the effective actions already implemented by leaders to promote pupils' attendance and reduce further the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that teaching assistants do not impede learning by providing too much support to pupils.
- Extend the careers guidance currently available to older pupils so that all age groups receive their entitlement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The key to the improvements made since the last inspection is the strong and determined leadership of the headteacher. She is ambitious for the pupils and has successfully led the school through a period of change and consolidation, transforming it from one that required improvement to one that is good.
- School leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation is an accurate reflection of its current position. It links directly to a comprehensive development plan which explains how improvements will be made.
- Senior and middle leaders work well as a team. Their contrasting strengths in different areas of the curriculum and their expertise in working with vulnerable pupils ensure that the school's academic and pastoral provision are equally effective.
- The creation of subject leaders is strengthening the capacity to bring about further improvements. For example, strong leadership in the teaching of English is setting high standards for pupils. Work in this subject is also used as a model to help other members of staff to improve their practice.
- Developing staff professionally is at the heart of the school's approach. Staff say how much they value the guidance and support they receive from leaders. They appreciate the numerous training opportunities to which they have access. For example, recent training in behaviour management and providing staff with a deeper understanding of the complex needs of the pupils are paying dividends. Pupils and staff report that the school is a much calmer place than it was a short time ago and the number of fixed-term exclusions has plummeted. Staff who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous in their belief that the school is a lot better than it was at the time of the last inspection.
- Leadership of teaching is highly effective in eliminating weaknesses and improving teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders' monitoring confirms where practice is strong and ensures that the right support and training are available when improvements need to be made.
- There is a broad and engaging curriculum that offers pupils a good range of opportunities to develop their academic and social skills. It is constantly under review and, where necessary, adapted to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. Recent changes to the timetable and options systems have enabled pupils to follow both academic and vocational pathways. This is working well, with pupils engaging enthusiastically in an extensive range of vocational courses, both in school and off-site. All lead to accreditation. The quality of external providers used by the school is regularly checked by leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is carefully woven through the curriculum and day-to-day life of the school. The personal, social, health and economic education programme supports pupils in learning how to keep safe, cope with change and grow and sustain relationships.

- Ensuring that pupils understand values such as tolerance and mutual respect is given a high priority. Pupils learn to listen to and value the views of others. These experiences help pupils to prepare for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils benefit from curriculum enrichment that includes a wide range of off-site visits. These include theatre visits and educational trips to places such as Lancaster Castle. Regular day trips into the local community strengthen pupils' social and emotional development, as well as supporting their academic progress.
- Good communication systems ensure that parents are kept well informed about their children's learning and progress. Regular telephone calls from their children's key workers are valued. A typical response from parents was 'They make sure we always know what is going on.' Parents receive termly progress reports and, in conversation with the inspectors, said that staff are very approachable if they need more information.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well by making sure that all pupils have full access to the curriculum and that all pupils are making equally good progress. Leaders tackle any form of discrimination rigorously.
- School leaders use additional funding well. Both the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium and the pupil premium funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are deployed effectively. Published reports and evidence from the inspection highlight the tangible benefits that deployment of this funding has brought, as seen in pupils' improving literacy and numeracy skills.
- The local authority school improvement adviser is providing good support for the school by organising services and forging links with other schools. These have contributed to the improvements made by the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is highly effective. Governors know the school well because of the wealth of relevant information provided by the headteacher and their ability to scrutinise it. They are proud of the school and share the headteacher's vision and high aspirations.
- Individual governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their roles. They put these to good use in supporting and challenging school leaders. For example, skills in handling personnel and finance matters have proved invaluable in recent years as the governing body has tackled difficult staffing and budget decisions.
- Governors ensure that the headteacher's appraisal is organised effectively.
- Governors ensure that their statutory duties are carried out efficiently. These include ensuring that the legal requirements for safeguarding are met and checking that all the necessary risk assessments are in place.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and there is a strong safeguarding culture that permeates the school.

- All training in child protection and safeguarding is up to date and the school's thorough procedures for checking the suitability of staff are implemented well.
- Parents, staff and pupils have confidence that pupils are safe. Pupils know what to do if they are worried or concerned.
- Staff take swift action to safeguard pupils when any concerns are raised. The school works effectively with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding to ensure that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good across the school in the full range of subjects. This ensures that the majority of pupils make at least good progress in national curriculum subjects and vocational studies.
- Staff know pupils well and relationships are good. Consequently, they plan and provide effective learning opportunities which ensure that pupils are interested and motivated to do their best. As a result, outcomes for pupils have continued to improve since the last inspection.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, both in their learning and in how well they behave in class. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to ensure that pupils catch up quickly and that gaps in their previous learning are filled. For example, improvements in the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills are reflected in the better outcomes in these subjects.
- Teachers challenge pupils to improve their work, even when some expressed doubts in their ability to complete a task. One pupil said: 'I never thought I'd be able to write this much but I'm really proud of my books now. The teachers are always ready to help if I need it.'
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour in lessons very well. They celebrate pupils' successes and are equally skilled at calming pupils down when they feel angry or frustrated. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and emotions in lessons. Many take 'time out' to compose themselves and ensure that their behaviour does not affect the learning of others.
- High levels of staffing ensure that pupils benefit from a personalised approach to their learning. Most teaching is carried out in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Teaching assistants generally work well in partnership with other teaching staff, especially in keeping pupils on-task. Occasionally, they provide pupils with too much support in completing tasks and this reduces the effectiveness of their learning.
- Strong systems have been introduced for assessing pupils when they arrive at the school and tracking their subsequent progress. The school's approach takes full account of changes to the curriculum and the increased expectations. These assessments are proving to be a valuable tool in helping staff to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to plan their next steps.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Induction and transition processes for new pupils are carefully considered and managed efficiently. This is important because many pupils have struggled in education in the past or have been out of education for an extended period.
- The school's work to build pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem is very effective. Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are generally positive and improving.
- Pupils appreciate the care and guidance shown to them by staff and were keen to share this view with inspectors. 'They are really interested in what we do. Even when we get upset they don't hold it against us. It's never personal', is typical of how pupils described the support they receive.
- The school's curriculum promotes pupils' physical and emotional well-being very well. Themes that promote building relationships, coping with changing situations, building self-respect and respecting others underpin the wider curriculum.
- Good-quality independent careers advice and guidance are available for older pupils in Year 11. In-school support is offered to younger pupils when they are choosing options, but this is not independent or impartial. Consequently, this aspect of the school's provision is in need of improvement.
- Leaders carefully monitor the quality and effectiveness of the alternative education providers used by the pupils. This helps to ensure that any placement meets their needs and interests. Leaders monitor pupils' progress in their placement through regular visits, sometimes unannounced. All placements potentially lead to accreditation and many pupils successfully move on to college courses.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are aware of the different types of bullying that they may encounter, including cyber bullying. Pupils say that incidents of bullying in school are rare. They are confident that, should it happen, staff would deal with it effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- School leaders give high priority to this aspect of the school's culture. The impact of strong relationships, an engaging curriculum, training for staff and higher expectations of pupils has been very positive. As a result, the number of incidents involving serious disruption in classrooms and around the school has fallen dramatically over a two-year period. In particular, fixed-term exclusions have been reduced to around a quarter of what they were in the school year 2015/16.
- Occasionally, pupils find it difficult to concentrate in class and their behaviour deteriorates. When this happens, staff have well-established strategies to minimise disruption to learning, calming situations before they become too serious. Records of incidents are kept meticulously and lessons learned are shared with all staff.

- Many pupils arrive at Moorbrook School with a history of poor attendance at their previous schools. Leaders work hard in partnership with parents to reduce absences. Attendance rates are improving but too many pupils still miss school regularly and this affects the continuity of their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good.
- Most pupils have gaps in their previous learning due to difficulties they encountered in their previous school. As a result, many pupils struggle to learn, especially in English and mathematics. Pupils' starting points are generally well below those typical for their age.
- Once pupils have settled into the school, a large majority make good progress. This is because they are provided with a package of support that is tailored to meet their individual needs. This includes skilled support in developing literacy and numeracy skills. Strong subject leadership in these areas is making a real difference for pupils.
- Pupils' progress along both the academic and vocational pathways is carefully tracked. Challenging targets are agreed with pupils and they are clear about what they need to do to reach them. Scrutiny of the pupils' records shows that, after a period of transition, most are making the progress necessary to overcome the deficits of the past.
- For many pupils, the opportunity to follow vocational courses is a key factor in preparing them for further education, training or employment. Pupils say how much they enjoy the varied options open to them, including cooking skills, construction, motor mechanics and fishery management. Motivation to do well in these courses is strong but pupils recognise that it will be hard to be successful without the complementary skills of English and mathematics. As one pupil pointed out, 'I didn't realise just how much I would need to calculate and write well during my construction course.'
- Staff have high aspirations for their pupils and prepare them well for examinations. For example, pupils work towards awards including functional skills certificates, entry-level qualifications, BTEC National Diploma and GCSEs. Although independent careers guidance for pupils needs to be extended across all year groups, in all other respects pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	119866
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10046520

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Diane Hodgson
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Thompson
Telephone number	01772 774 752
Website	www.moorbrook.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Email address	bursar@moorbrook.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 May 2016

Information about this school

- Moorbrook School is smaller than most secondary schools. It is for pupils aged 11 to 16 who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were 35 boys attending.
- Pupils are diagnosed with a range of disorders and many receive support from child and adolescent mental health services, following assessments by a number of outside agencies.
- The school uses seven alternative providers. These providers are the Preston Vocational Centre, Cast North West (Wigan), 4Techmoto (Preston), Fixit (Wigan), Eqwise (Chorley), Hawthorn Education and Regent Park Studios.
- The school currently receives formal support from the local authority advisory team. It has been identified as a school 'requiring additional support', with progress supported and monitored by local authority officers.

- All pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan for emotional, behavioural and other difficulties or a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a range of lessons or parts of lessons in a variety of subjects. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with governors, a local authority officer who works with the school's headteacher, other school leaders and staff.
- The inspectors had a meeting with one parent and telephone conversations with other parents of pupils. They also spoke with an officer of the local authority who places pupils at the school.
- The inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally. They looked at their work and the school's records of their progress. They also listened to individual pupils as they read.
- There were insufficient responses to generate a report from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors took account of the two free-text responses from parents.
- The inspectors took into account seven responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including those available on its website.

Inspection team

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