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20 April 2015

Mr Mark Bocker  
Headteacher  
The Oswaldtwistle School  
Union Road  
Oswaldtwistle  
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Lancashire  
BB5 3DA

Dear Mr Bocker

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Oswaldtwistle School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 17 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- strengthen the action plan by identifying clearly how leaders' actions will impact on improving students' learning
- ensure reading is promoted well across the school
- ensure students benefit from teachers and teaching assistants having the opportunity to see for themselves what good practice looks like in other good and outstanding schools.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, students, the Chair of the Management Committee, a teacher, a teaching assistant and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also took the opportunity to visit several classrooms and to scrutinise a sample of students' work and other documents provided by the school.

## **Context**

Two assistant headteachers along with a teacher have been appointed to fill vacancies. Two teaching assistants have been appointed to cover long term absence. A site manager has also been appointed. One governor has been appointed to fill one of several vacancies that remain on the management committee.

## **Main findings**

Leaders have acted swiftly to draw up an action plan which reflects what needs to be done to improve the school to good. Actions have been mapped out so that they build logically on earlier success. However, the plan does not give a clear enough indication of how leaders' actions will impact on students' learning. Therefore, leaders are not able to evaluate effectively if their actions are making any difference to students' achievement.

The school's own records show that, since the inspection, leaders have increased the frequency by which they scrutinise the quality of teaching in the school. Leaders observation of lessons along with their scrutiny of students' work books has led to a concentrated approach to training for all staff. For example, a recent teachers' meeting focussed on teachers' planning for lessons. Students spoken with said that teachers now provide clearer explanations of what they expect from them in lessons. As a consequence students feel that they are able to focus more effectively on the skills and knowledge they are acquiring and are less easily distracted from their learning. However, it is too early to judge the impact of leaders' actions to improve teaching on students' learning overall.

Leaders have concentrated effectively on introducing new systems to improve the quality of teaching as a means of increasing students' progress. Teachers' use of leaders' assessment of what students can do when they join the school is beginning to show through. Teachers set appropriately challenging targets for all students. However, although students' behaviour targets were displayed in classrooms which I visited, students' individual academic targets are not displayed with the same prominence. Consequently, teachers' use of students' specific academic targets is not fully embedded throughout the school.

The impact of teaching assistants on students' progress is beginning to show the green shoots of improvement. Leaders' introduction of 'class packs', which contain a range of information including teachers' planning for lessons, has enabled teaching assistants to be more effective than before the inspection. One teaching assistant I spoke to adjusted her support for a student as a result of what she had gleaned from the class pack. Consequently, the student was able to apply effectively a strategy to tessellate shapes in a mathematics lesson and made appropriate progress in the lesson.

Leaders' introduction of a whole school marking policy is not fully embedded across the school. My scrutiny of a sample of students' work books and files showed that the policy is not used consistently well by all teachers. For example, in too high a proportion of those books scrutinised, teachers' did not follow precisely the policy in terms of correcting the mis-spelling of key words or the incorrect use of punctuation. This resulted in missed opportunities to improve students' work.

Leaders have begun to increase the rigour by which they monitor the quality of off-site alternative provision experienced by students from the school. Since the inspection leaders have visited systematically all alternative providers used by the school. Leaders now have an accurate understanding of where improvements need to be made by providers. For example, leaders have insisted that all alternative provision courses lead to appropriate qualifications in English and mathematics. Consequently, at least one provider has already made changes to include GCSE English and mathematics in courses attended by students from Oswaldtwistle School.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Leaders have made appropriate use of their attendance at seminars provided by Ofsted, for example 'Getting to Good' and 'Through the Lens of Inspection' in order to focus their efforts on what needs to be done to improve the school.

Leaders have worked effectively with the local authority in order to build an accurate picture of the quality of teaching across the school. Joint lesson observations along with the scrutiny of students' work, between leaders and a local authority school improvement officer, have led to leaders' clear focus on the improvement of teaching.

Leaders have not yet made effective use of links with other good and outstanding schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Management Committee
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy