

Moorbrook School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	119866
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	384910
Inspection dates	27 June 2012
Lead inspector	Liz Godman

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Special
Age range of pupils	11 - 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dianne Hodgson
Headteacher	Mick Ironmonger
Date of previous school inspection	18-19 January 2011
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Introduction

Inspection team

Liz Godman

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspector observed six lessons and four lessons for shorter periods of time, taught by 10 teachers and teaching assistants. Meetings were held with staff and representatives of the governing body. Informal meetings were held with groups of students. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documents, safeguarding information and records of students' attendance, behaviour and progress. Questionnaires for parents and carers are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Information about the school

Moorbrook School is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A number of students have additional special educational needs, including specific learning difficulties and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all students are from a White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. A small number of students attend alternative provision on a full or part-time basis. These include a local college of further education and vocational providers.

At the time of the previous full inspection in January 2011, the school was placed in special measures. This was the fourth monitoring inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because students' progress, their skills in reading and writing and the feedback they receive are in need of some further improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Students' progress has improved, so that achievement is now satisfactory. However, due to previously disrupted schooling and poor attendance of some, students' progress has been erratic, they have gaps in their knowledge and skills, and their confidence is low. A number of students have persistently weak reading and writing skills, especially when these are required in the different subjects of the curriculum. Effective steps have been taken to provide additional support for individual students who need it, but there has been insufficient time for this to have full impact.
- The quality of teaching is consistently satisfactory, with much that is good and a small amount that is outstanding. This is securing students' better progress. Although some feedback given to students is of high quality, this is inconsistent. Lessons are not always adjusted in the light of students' responses and there are limited opportunities for students to evaluate their work.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. The incidence of unacceptable behaviour and the use of exclusions have reduced. The school is calm and orderly and students say that they feel safe.
- The school has a stable and effective leadership team whose actions and engagement of the whole school are securing improvement. The governing body and staff have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school is securely placed to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of progress of all students by:
 - ensuring that the attendance of all students is sufficient to enable them to learn effectively
 - increasing students' confidence in their ability to learn competently and independently
 - enabling students to close the gaps in their prior learning, knowledge and skills.

- Increase students' skills in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring there are regular opportunities to practise these skills in all the subjects of the curriculum
 - making sure that students are able to read the texts provided in all lessons
 - extending the additional support for individuals who are experiencing particular difficulties in reading and writing.

- Improve the consistency of feedback given to students by:
 - making wider use of the examples of exemplary practice in marking
 - adjusting lessons according to the students' responses
 - increasing the opportunities for students to assess their own and others' work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' learning in lessons has improved considerably and is consistently satisfactory, often good and, occasionally, outstanding. Students arrive at lessons prepared to learn and are engaged and motivated by the activities provided. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson students were very eager to examine the 'crime scene' in the school library and to interview the 'witness'. They undertook this task sensibly and carefully, recording evidence in notes and pictures and taking turns to interview the 'witness' sensitively and maturely. Consequently, they made outstanding progress in both communication and social skills.

Students' progress over time is accelerating and is now satisfactory overall. The progress of many students has been erratic, often from exceptionally low starting points. As a result, a number of students have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills, particularly in English and mathematics. Work is underway to address this, but for many students there is much ground to make up. Students' past experiences of school mean that many, especially at Key Stage 4, lack confidence in learning and

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have little belief that they can tackle a task independently and successfully. However, most in the current Year 10 show improved confidence and attitudes to learning and are on track to gain grades A to G at GCSE in English, mathematics and science.

The school has identified accurately the needs of students with specific literacy difficulties and has established effective teaching programmes to improve their reading and writing skills. This is proving effective, particularly for the younger students. These students are becoming less reluctant to write, particularly when they are able to use information and communication technology (ICT) to do so. Nevertheless, more students are identified as in need of additional help of this type as a number of students struggle to read texts in the different subjects.

Attainment is low, but improving. Students in the current Year 11 have gained accreditation in Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Functional Skills and at Entry Level in a number of subjects. A greater proportion than in previous years has also taken GCSE examinations. Most of these students are expecting to remain in education when they leave school and have secured places at college to study catering, photography and sports, for example.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, almost all of the teaching observed was good or better. However, to date this has not been sufficiently sustained to ensure that students make consistently good progress. Teachers plan lessons which are matched well to the range of needs of students in the group. Teachers use their good subject knowledge, for example in history, food technology, design technology and sports, to provide activities which allow students to demonstrate their analytical and practical skills and which secure their enthusiasm and interest. Most lessons move at a fast pace and provide a good degree of challenge, with a growing variety of different approaches, including group and paired work. This secures the good engagement of most students in most lessons and contributes positively to their growing social, moral and cultural understanding.

Students are increasingly prepared to write because of the varied methods available for recording their work, for example, individual whiteboards, sheets for note-taking and the use of ICT. However, this is not consistent and reading and writing activities are not planned systematically in all lessons in the different subjects. In addition, in some lessons where reading activities are planned, the texts are too difficult for some of the less able readers. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in lessons in engaging students and in assisting them with reading and writing. They are especially effective when providing individual help to students with identified literacy difficulties.

There are examples of effective feedback to students which indicate to them how to improve their work and how to reach the next level. Marking in students' English books is a strong example of this. Similarly, in a Year 10 science lesson on energy, the teacher made it explicit to the students how they could demonstrate

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achievement against the different GCSE grade criteria and provided them with example examination questions to enable them to do this. Students evaluated their performance against these criteria and understood clearly how well they had done, seeing that a higher grade was within their grasp. There are also examples of effective questioning which encourages students to evaluate their learning, probes their understanding effectively and are used by the teacher to adjust the content of the lesson accordingly. However, these good examples of the use of assessment to raise students' expectations and improve their work are not consistent in all lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour over time has improved significantly and is now satisfactory. The use of exclusions and the occurrence of serious incidents and inappropriate behaviour show a marked reduction. Representatives of the local authority and of the governing body, including parent governors, confirm that the school is much calmer and that students' behaviour and interest in learning are much better. Staff and students confirm this. Relationships are consistently positive. Students are trusted when handling equipment and respond to this positively by handling tools and equipment safely and sensibly, whether javelins in physical education, matches in science or kebab skewers in food technology. Behaviour around the school is satisfactory and at break times students engage positively in football, conversation or ICT. Behaviour observed in lessons during the inspection was generally good. Students showed signs of developing empathy and a growing awareness of the effects of their behaviour on other people, for example, usually remaining calm when they experienced difficulties with their work. The school has robust and consistent systems for managing behaviour and students are highly motivated by the new reward system, eager to build their points score towards a residential experience at the end of the school term.

Students say that they feel safe at school and are confident that there are adults they can turn to should they need help. Recorded incidents of bullying are rare. This is confirmed by students who understand the different forms bullying may take.

Attendance, although low, is improving in Years 7 to 10. This is the result of the school's emphasis on the importance of regular attendance for ensuring students' good progress. However, the persistent absence of some individuals continues to be a barrier to their educational achievement.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders have taken effective steps to raise the expectations of staff and students. They manage performance well so that everyone shares their high aspirations and is eager for the school to succeed. Leaders, in partnership with the local authority, have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching, which has proved successful, so that there is now an increasing proportion of good or better teaching. This in turn, is securing students' satisfactory and improving achievement and behaviour.

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The curriculum is broad and relevant, with a greater emphasis on enrichment and on improving students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This has had a positive effect on students' behaviour, attendance and engagement in learning. Students appreciate the wider range of cultural experiences available in art, sport and music, as well as the opportunities to learn about different cultures. Although steps have been taken to improve students' reading and writing skills across the curriculum, these are at an early stage of development and it is too soon to see their full impact. Improvements to the curriculum are also helping to improve students' skills for the future through the introduction of courses more closely matched to individual and vocational needs. These factors indicate the school's satisfactory promotion of equality and tackling of discrimination.

School self-evaluation is highly accurate, especially as all staff and members of the governing body have been involved in collating evidence and making judgements. This evaluation is used well to identify priorities and to plan to meet these. The involvement of the governing body in the daily life of the school has improved, so that governors now visit the school regularly and judge its effectiveness for themselves. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Links with parents and carers are also increasingly positive, as indicated by their increased involvement with their children's annual reviews and school events.

Improvements in the school's effectiveness, the accuracy and use of its self-evaluation and the growing strength in leadership at senior and middle levels, indicate the school's secure capacity to continue to improve.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Moorbrook School, Fulwood PR2 3DB

Thank you for your help with the inspection. I enjoyed meeting you again. I have been visiting the school for some time now, but you will be pleased to learn that the school is now satisfactory and no longer requires 'special measures'. Congratulations!

Your progress has improved and is now satisfactory. The school is not yet good as more improvements are needed to your progress and to your reading and writing. I saw that the extra help that some of you receive to improve your reading and writing is working well. I have asked your school to make sure more of you receive this help and have opportunities to use these skills more regularly in all your lessons.

Your progress is improving because the quality of teaching you receive is at least satisfactory, often good and, occasionally, outstanding. Sometimes though, you do not receive feedback on how to improve your work or you do not have time to check it. I saw you enjoying practical activities and being very sensible when making kebabs or throwing the javelin. I hope that Year 8 solve the murder mystery soon!

Your behaviour in lessons is much better, so well done! You told me that you think the school is calmer and you feel safe and that this is helping you to learn more effectively. Your staff and governors know the school well and want to make it better for you. To do this, I have asked them to:

- help you all to make faster progress
- help you to improve your reading and writing
- make sure you are clear about how to improve your work.

I know that many of you have not always been to school regularly and because of this you have gaps in your knowledge and skills and some of you do not believe you can learn well. I know though that if you all believe in yourselves and come to school regularly you will do well. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely
Liz Godman
Lead inspector

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