

# Moorcroft School

Bramble Close, Hillingdon, Uxbridge, UB8 3BF

**Inspection dates** 11–12 December 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	NA
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Is good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Recent improvements have not had sufficient time to ensure that teaching is consistently good to ensure all students achieve well.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is accurately enough matched to students' needs, nor demand enough of students to ensure they make consistently rapid progress.
- Staff, particularly the learning support assistants, do not always have the skills they need to fully support students.
- The sixth form requires improvement because in some lessons students are not fully engaged in activities.
- The school's approach to developing students' literacy and communication skills is new and is not followed consistently.
- Leaders are building up data about students' progress but cannot yet track how well students are doing over a long enough length of time.

### The school has the following strengths

- The Eden Academy Directors have put in place a thorough and carefully thought-through action plan to improve the quality of provision.
- The executive headteacher is very well supported by senior staff and is using effective ways of checking teaching and learning and students' progress.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They know staff listen to them. They feel safe because they get good quality care and support.
- Close partnerships with a range of agencies, particularly therapists, enhance the progress of individual students and their well-being.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons and all ten teachers were seen. The majority of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. In addition, a number of other short visits were made to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with the school council and other students, the Chief Executive Officer of Eden Academy and other directors, including representatives from the Moorcroft School Operational Board, the Principal of Eden Academy who is also executive headteacher of Moorcroft School, as well as school staff including senior and middle leaders.
- The inspection team checked responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and while in school. There were not enough responses online to show a result. During the inspection the school's analysis of its own questionnaire responses from parents and carers and students was used to provide a clearer picture of their views.
- The team observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own information on students' past and current progress and planning documentation.

## Inspection team

Stuart Charlton, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Sandra Teacher

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Moorcroft School provides education for secondary students who have a statement of special educational needs related to severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Some students also have additional sensory or physical impairments, or challenging behaviour. Students joining the school have increasingly complex needs.
- The students come from a wide range of ethnic heritages. Just under half are White British and one third are from Asian backgrounds. The other ethnic groupings are not sufficiently large to be statistically significant. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high.
- Moorcroft joined with a partner special school for primary aged pupils, Grangewood School, to form a Multi-Academy Trust called The Eden Academy on 1 June 2012. When its predecessor school, also called Moorcroft School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be satisfactory overall. This is the first inspection of Moorcroft School in its new position as part of Eden Academy.
- Recent changes and resignations in the senior management personnel of Eden Academy have required the principal to act as executive headteacher for Moorcroft School, supported by senior leaders and a seconded senior teacher from the partner school in the academy.
- There is an operational board for each of Grangewood and Moorcroft schools and these boards are responsible to the Eden Academy board of directors working under a chief executive officer.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' learning by ensuring that in all lessons, including in the sixth form:
  - teachers use information about individual students' progress and targets to plan activities that build on what students can already do
  - staff question and challenge students more effectively so that all participate fully
  - staff apply the school's approach to developing students' literacy and communication skills consistently.
- Build on improvements made to the tracking of students' progress to ensure that leaders and managers can make a secure analysis of how well students are doing over a period of time.
- Implement the planned changes to the curriculum and the school timetables so that:
  - students' needs are fully met
  - more time is provided for staff, particularly the learning support assistants, to gain the skills they need to further develop their practice.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Since the appointment of the executive headteacher students' achievements in Moorcroft School have improved markedly.
- The overwhelming majority of students have attended the partner school in Eden Academy before they enter Moorcroft. Their starting points are low, and often very low, because of their special needs. The school is embedding the rigorous and robust systems from its partner school so that challenging targets are set for students. As yet, these are not used to best effect in classrooms to ensure that all students make good progress.
- Overall, students' achievements are only broadly in line with those of students with similar difficulties nationally and their rates of progress are slower than when they were in the academy partner school. There are no differences in achievement related to students' special educational needs, gender or ethnic origin. The progress of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, 70% of the school population, requires improvement as does progress as a whole.
- On entry to Moorcroft School, students' needs are carefully assessed and the support they require is identified. They settle quickly into their new school due to the effective care they receive from staff. When students leave the sixth form this is managed well so that they move smoothly to the next stage of their education or into appropriate social services placements.
- Many students, particularly those in the younger classes, use pictorial and visual prompts to aid communication. Generally, they apply these skills and their numeracy and personal skills appropriately across different areas of learning. However, the school's approach to developing students' literacy and communication skills is not implemented consistently, and where it is not fully applied, progress slows.
- By Year 11, a small proportion of students use oral approaches to communicate, depending on their needs. They learn to recognise numbers and develop basic number concepts. Many students make progress in developing their skills in communication and they are learning to express their views effectively. Some students develop reading skills and writing skills well. In the sixth form students continue to develop their academic and personal skills appropriately.
- Nevertheless, throughout the school, students' achievement requires further improvement to build better on the progress they made in their primary years. In some lessons they are not sufficiently challenged to participate fully in all activities.
- Parents and carers report that their children gain in confidence and that they are happy to come to school.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Generally, teachers have good subject knowledge, but do not all have the high level of specific skills they need to meet students' special needs. They, and many of the learning support assistants, do not always use signing and pictorial prompts identified in the school's communications strategy with sufficient consistency to ensure the systematic development of students' communication and literacy skills.
- In classrooms, students' progress is recorded regularly and this includes observations and photographs of their achievements. This information is not always linked effectively to students' targets to ensure that planned activities build on what individual students can already do.
- The school provides parents and carers with good levels of information about the school's teaching strategies to help them to understand how their children learn best and to support their progress at home.
- Across the school, there are examples of effective teaching where staff set high expectations for students and challenge them to ensure that they achieve well. For example, in a Year 12

food technology lesson, the teacher used questioning to good effect to consolidate earlier learning and to develop students' understanding of the best ingredients to use to make hot fruit salad. Students' learning was well supported by the learning support assistants.

- Such practice is not consistent across the school and in a small minority of lessons teachers do not always use sufficiently open-ended questioning (questions which cannot be answered with a simple yes/no) to challenge every student to learn rapidly. In some other lessons in the sixth form teachers did not keep students sufficiently engaged in activities.
- Relationships between staff and students are generally good and students receive a high quality of care, guidance and support for their personal development.
- Staff encourage students to try new things, which makes an effective contribution to the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** is good

- The school makes good improvements to the lives of students both at school and at home through developing positive attitudes to learning and in helping students to manage their own behaviour.
- The school's records and reports from parents and carers confirm the improvements the school makes to students' behaviour. A proportion of the students were new to the school in September 2012. Consequently, there were isolated instances during the inspection when staff had to explain the school's expectations of behaviour to these students; they responded to this well.
- The school places appropriate emphasis on developing students' self-esteem and confidence. Students are respected as individuals, and staff use praise and rewards to good effect to reinforce progress in personal development. As a result, there have been no recent exclusions.
- Students enjoy coming to school and their attendance is broadly average. Students say they make good friends in school and there is a calm and harmonious working atmosphere throughout.
- Safety is given high priority and students are clear about how they should behave in a range of situations. Risk assessments are thorough.
- Parents and carers indicate that they feel their children are safe and secure at all times and that any type of bullying is extremely rare; records show that any such instances are dealt with appropriately. The students themselves support this view. Staff devote a great deal of time to helping students to listen carefully to instructions and respond to the feelings of others.

### **The leadership and management** require improvement

- The headteacher sets high expectations for staff and students. He has a very clear vision about how the provision should develop and is very well supported by senior leaders and the vast majority of other staff. However, leadership and management are not yet good because recent changes have not yet had time to have a full impact, particularly in ensuring that the curriculum (things outlined for students to be taught) is closely targeted to their individual needs.
- With the support of the directors and senior leaders, the headteacher is establishing a real sense of purpose across the school. The policies and practices that have been introduced in a very short period of time are beginning to have a positive and immediate effect on improving students' performance.
- The present curriculum, introduced in September 2012, places appropriate emphasis on the systematic development of students' basic skills. The school is using the additional funding it receives from the pupil premium initiative appropriately to make the curriculum more

responsive to students' special needs.

- This work has only been taking place since the school became an academy so it is too soon to see significant improvements in the outcomes for the students at whom funding is targeted. The school rightly plans to instigate further changes to the curriculum and timetable so that every student follows a curriculum that fully matches and meets their individual needs.
  - The rigorous checks on teaching and learning that have been developed are helping to ensure that performance management is effective and full account is taken of national teaching standards (a list of what teachers should do to be doing a good job). The professional development of staff is now carefully linked to priorities for development. However, timetabling has limited the time available for training of support staff.
  - School leaders report that limited data about students' progress was available when the school became an academy. Since then progress has been recorded and analysed appropriately but as yet there remain limited data available to check on students' progress in the longer term.
  - Students are given a good range of additional things to do outside formal lessons. These aspects of the curriculum are effective in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The breadth of these activities and their accessibility show that the school values every one of its students regardless of their difficulties and tackles discrimination and seeks to promote equality with determination and vigour.
  - The good involvement and support of all agencies, particularly the therapists, ensures that students receive the extra help they need.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The Eden Academy Directors and the Moorcroft School Operational Board provide very clear direction and highly effective support to the work of the school. They ensure they are properly trained, challenge the school well and use resources effectively. They ensure that policies and procedures, including those relating to safeguarding, are of high quality and have a positive impact on the life of the school. For example, recent changes and resignations in senior management personnel required the school to take urgent action to cover Child Protection requirements and further training has been commissioned to ensure that staff fully meet the highest standards. The directors and board members ensure arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are thorough, and a clear link is made between staff performance and remuneration. They understand data, how the school performs against similar schools nationally and check the quality of teaching and learning and to help ensure the achievements are improving. They also check on how the budget is spent and on its impact, for example the use of the pupil premium funding.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138158
<b>Local authority</b>	Hillingdon
<b>Inspection number</b>	406766
<b>Type of school</b>	Academy special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	64
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	29
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Susan Douglas
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Ayres
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