

Moorcroft School

Bramble Close, Hillingdon UB8 3BF

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher, along with the head of school and other leaders, has high expectations for all the students.
- Leaders, including the governing body, have ensured that all students achieve well by improving teaching through effective training and rigorous checking of learning.
- The progress of most of the students has improved and is now good. Progress in mathematics is particularly good.
- Members of the governing body have increased their skills and they now use these well to challenge leaders to improve the school even more.
- Leaders manage the budget well, ensuring that additional funding for disadvantaged students is spent for their benefit. As a result, these students achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, their classmates in English and mathematics.
- Parents are pleased with their children's progress.
- The range of subjects and high quality additional therapies supports students' learning and personal development well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Assemblies include multicultural topics, which help to promote students' awareness of the wider world. As a result, students improve their independence, their enjoyment and their personal skills.
- Students behave well in and around the school. Many find it difficult to express themselves, but a few more able students said that they feel safe. The school's arrangements to keep them safe and secure are strong.
- Teaching is typically good. Most tasks are effectively planned and meet students' individual needs well, so that students make good progress. Relationships in lessons are very strong.
- The sixth form is good and students have opportunities to gain some qualifications.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Just occasionally, students' progress in English dips when the tasks set are too easy and when resources used do not interest them.
- The range of accreditation for sixth formers has improved, but lower attaining students do not yet have sufficient access to qualifications to prepare them fully for their next stage of learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed eight lessons, many of them jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors also observed students sharing their books.
- Inspectors spoke with several students.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher other leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chief Executive Officer of the Eden Academy Trust, the academy lead for the family services and the therapy team.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information about students' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and students' work.
- There were too few parent responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View) to generate enough information. Inspectors took account of the most recent responses to the school's own parent questionnaire. The 35 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Michael Buist

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Moorcroft School, along with its partners Grangewood School and Alexandra School, are known as The Eden Academy, which is a multi-academy trust. All three schools work closely together, but have kept their original names. The three schools also have strong links with Sunshine House, a local Royal National Institute for the Blind school.
- This school caters for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. About a third of students have autism, and a rising number has challenging autism spectrum disorders. A small number also have hearing impairment, visual impairment and/or physical difficulties. All students have a statement for their learning difficulties.
- About a third of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average.
- A high number of students come from families who speak English as an additional language.
- Around a quarter of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is about average. This is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or those children who are looked after by a local authority.
- The sixth form students have their own separate accommodation at the school. Off site activities for sixth form students take place at the local West Thames College.
- Students come from all parts of the London Borough of Hillingdon and some adjacent local authorities. They all travel to school in buses or taxis.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that tasks in English lessons are challenging enough for students and that resources sustain their interest so that they are keen to achieve as well as possible
- Increase access to wider accreditation in the sixth form, particularly for the lower attaining students, so that they are even better prepared for their futures.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have worked effectively to improve all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection. The executive headteacher, together with other staff and governors, have successfully raised achievement by improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders and managers, including middle leaders, are focused on improvement. They have high expectations of staff and students. Middle leaders have been central to the development of the new curriculum that is linked closely to students' individual needs, ensuring that they all enjoy learning.
- Leaders and governors model good professional standards in their work and are proud of their school and the positive atmosphere for learning that they have created. Leaders are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Policies are closely linked to students' needs and ensure that they make at least good progress in literacy and numeracy.
- The effective range of subjects on offer engages students and contributes well to their academic achievements, their physical skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All of these contribute well to students' good behaviour and understanding of safety. Just occasionally, resources and tasks in English do not engage students well enough and, as a result, their learning dips.
- A new system for checking students' progress has been recently introduced so that leaders can check progress more regularly. This enables any student falling behind to be helped to improve quickly.
- Parents who completed the school's own questionnaires recently say they are pleased with the all aspects of the school's work.
- Partnerships with the two other academies in the trust, and with Sunshine House School, are good and are helping to improve teaching and learning using shared expertise from skilled and experienced staff.
- Procedures for setting targets for teachers are fully established and leaders ensure that salary increases are not awarded unless staff have met their targets which are based on their students' progress. This has resulted in teachers' skills improving.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have regular training in aspects such as the safeguarding of students, so that there is consistent practice across the school.
- The experiences offered by the school support British values and contribute well to students' preparation for life in modern Britain. For example, the students make regular visits to local places of interest and go shopping in the local high street.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted through the study of different faiths and cultures. Specifically planned assemblies raise awareness about discrimination of any kind.
- The school receives good guidance from the academy trust, who are very supportive of improvements made by the head of school. Links with the wider community are good. Sheltered work experience opportunities in local shops and in the school offer more able students opportunities to prepare well for their futures.
- Safety checks are undertaken regularly and whole staff training is rigorous. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Leaders ensure that staff are able to identify any students at risk of harm through high quality, frequent training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has improved in the past two years because members have received training and now provide good challenge to leaders to make the school even better. Governors now have a good range of skills which they use well to benefit the school. They know how effective the school is because they carry out regular learning walks and receive termly reports from leaders about students' achievements. They fully understand the information about students' progress and how it compares with other similar schools. Governors manage the school's finances well, so additional funding is used to help students who are eligible to receive it. They ensure additional resources are used to support, these students' so that their achievements are at least as good as others. Governors ensure that the best teachers and staff are rewarded. They know how important it is to set targets for teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students behave well in lessons and show positive attitudes in all activities.

- New incident and behaviour logs indicate a positive approach to behaviour management, with encouraging results. There has been a reduction in the number of incidents and in the use of physical interventions. Records show marked improvements in a few students' behaviour over time.
- Students have limited understanding of bullying, but a few older students said they did not think there was bullying at the school.
- Students' mainly positive behaviour and attitudes are fostered well by the good range of learning and high quality support. As a result, there have been no permanent or short-term exclusions over the past two years.
- The school has an increasing number of students with challenging autism spectrum disorders. Physical handling plans endeavour to minimise any risk of escalation of incidents, and all staff have received training. Just occasionally, the behaviour of one or two students impacts on the learning of others, but this is generally well managed.
- Students' personal development is promoted well by teaching assistants, who are always ready to support them and provide guidance. Leaders promote tolerance for all pupils and help them to be well prepared for life in modern Britain through their study of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles.
- Effective provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students includes a wide range of trips into the local area and beyond. Good quality links with the other two academies ensure that students have greater opportunities to mix with others. Students know right from wrong and there is a balanced approach to the broadly Christian religious education which encompasses world faiths.
- Students are prepared well for their lives after leaving school through their good achievements and accreditation.
- Students' improving attendance shows their increasing enjoyment of school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. A small number of students were able to say that they feel safe at school. Leaders ensure that students are safe by creating a safe environment. Good quality risk assessments for any activity or visit are evident. Routines are clear and well established.
- Case studies show that there is a strong focus on safeguarding. Students' access to social media is carefully supervised, ensuring their e-safety.
- Students in the sixth form are safe and secure, both in the academy and at college.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved in the past two years because of effective training and rigorous checks by leaders. As a result, teaching is now good, enabling students to make at least good progress in most subjects, including English and especially in mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations in lessons are usually high, ensuring that students are challenged to deepen their knowledge so that they make at least good progress in their learning.
- Reading and writing are mainly taught well, although students' learning can slow because tasks are sometimes too easy and the resources used do not engage or interest students well enough. This is why teaching is not outstanding.
- Because of students' low abilities, many are helped to express their ideas well through symbols, photographs, and/or technology, enabling them to offer ideas and have their say. Those with profound and multiple difficulties, for example, make good use of a range of technologies to respond well to teachers' questions.
- The teaching of mathematics is typically good because students enjoy the practical approaches used and, as a result, they are keen to do well.
- Good levels of support in literacy lessons help pupils to improve their skills, because teaching assistants help students to succeed by spending time explaining what is expected of them. Questions are used well to encourage responses and build students' confidence.
- The teaching of communication has been a focus for improvement and is now good because of the high level of support and training provided by speech therapists. The good use of technology, signing and/or symbols helps all groups of students to have a means of communication. This means they can respond and express their ideas.
- Students receive regular feedback about their work. This is often verbal, but is always typically helpful, giving examples of how pupils can improve their skills and what they could try next time. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics. The new assessment system is helping staff to check each small step of progress on a regular basis.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is well below that expected for their age, because of their learning difficulties. However, once they start at the school, they begin to catch up because of the strong support provided for them.
- All groups of students, including those who receive additional government funding, those with additional special educational needs such as autism, sensory or physical difficulties, achieve equally well in English and mathematics because of good quality guidance and support. The proportion of students making good progress has improved in the past two years.
- Just very occasionally, students' achievement in English lessons dips slightly when tasks are too easy and/or resources do not interest them. At these times, students' achievement is not good because the students lose interest and enthusiasm for their tasks. As a result, achievement is not outstanding.
- Achievement in mathematics is particularly good and students enjoy the good practical tasks that engage them well. The most able students are well challenged by the work set in mathematics lessons. For example, in Years 7 and 8, they benefited from good resources that enabled them to count objects up to 10.
- Students benefit from effective links across subjects. For example, in a design and technology project, mathematical skills helped those in Year 9 to group plastics, metals and wood successfully.
- The progress of disadvantaged students is similar, and sometimes better than that of other students in the school and gaps in attainment are closing. This is because of additional support and expertise that helps them to improve quickly.
- Students with additional special educational needs make similar progress to other students because of the wide range of therapies available which supports their sensory or physical needs.
- Students benefit from effective access to sports activities through their own swimming pool and through the close links within the academy trust. In physical education sessions, students achieve extremely well because they are challenged to work at a fast rate and learn about the link between exercise and healthy lifestyles.

The sixth form provision is good

- The sixth form is good. Programmes and courses meet students' individual needs and abilities well.
- Strong relationships between students and staff ensure that students enjoy the sixth form. Staff are proud of students, support them well and are keen for them to succeed.
- Students are well looked after and effectively supported in lessons and in their free time. They are confident that someone will listen to their problems and know that there is always someone to talk to.
- Progress is good. All students met their expected targets and achieved their accredited courses last year. Progress is not outstanding however, because sometimes the range of accreditation does not meet individual abilities and needs fully. Occasionally, choices are limited, particularly for the lower attaining students.
- Leaders are working to improve accreditation further, and opportunities to follow vocational courses at the local college for one day a week have improved. More able students attend West Thames College each week to undertake work-related courses which they thoroughly enjoy and which contribute to their employability.
- The sixth form curriculum has improved this year and leaders have ensured that students have good opportunities to learn about the wider world and to develop their independence skills. They have regular trips, for example, into the local area to shop for ingredients.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is good because of the high focus placed on these areas, and students make good progress on their accredited courses.
- Teaching in the sixth form is usually relevant to the ages of the students; although occasionally, tasks are not completely meaningful to individual students. Social skills are promoted well, however, through the good accommodation, which includes a spacious kitchen and common room area which students value and take care of.
- The behaviour of students is good and they say that they enjoy their time in the sixth form. Students feel safe and secure in the sixth form accommodation.

- Leadership of the sixth form is relatively new, but has made an immediate impact on extending opportunities for students.
- Staff check students' work regularly. Moderation with partner schools is used to ensure accurate assessments.

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

Unique reference number	138158
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	449065

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy Trust
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Bird
Headteacher	Andrew Sanders
Executive head	John Ayers
Date of previous school inspection	December 2012
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