

Moorcroft School

Bramble Close, Hillingdon, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3BF

Inspection dates

1 to 2 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Exceptional leadership has established a culture of high expectations for this successful school. Leaders and staff strive to support pupils' needs so that they can develop their independence and become active members of the community.
- Governance supports and challenges leaders to ensure that standards in all areas of the school remain high.
- Leaders, including trustees and members of the local advisory body, put a strong focus on supporting staff to develop their practice. Pupils benefit from excellent teaching, support and care from staff. A strong team spirit exists in the school.
- Leaders have ensured that curriculum pathways are accurately matched to support pupils' needs exceptionally well. The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders are successful in their aim to nurture pupils' personal development and welfare, and do so to great effect. This enhances pupils' confidence and positive attitudes to learning.
- The sixth-form provision is outstanding. Individualised study programmes enable students to make excellent progress in developing their personal attributes, independence and employability skills. This prepares students exceptionally well for their transition to life beyond school.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. A collaborative approach by teachers and therapists ensures that pupils engage in high-quality learning.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' outcomes are rigorously reviewed by all staff. This helps pupils to make consistently strong progress socially and across the curriculum, including in English, mathematics and science.
- Parents and carers strongly support the school. Regular newsletters and workshops have proved very useful in helping parents support their children's learning. Plans are underway for the school to maintain these strong links with parents, through regular parental meetings.
- Effective teaching enables pupils to make gains in their English skills. However, some pupils with the appropriate ability receive limited opportunities to develop strong writing skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that those pupils who have the ability to develop their writing skills have enough opportunities to practise these skills.
- Continue to focus on parental engagement to uphold strong links with parents and carers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Exemplary leadership underpins the school's success. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, pursue excellence for pupils and staff, and provide extensive support for pupils' families. Staff share leaders' ambitions for all pupils to develop the independent skills required for learning and for their future lives.
- Leaders have established a clear direction for the school. A culture of high expectations motivates staff to provide the very best education to meet the needs of pupils. Whether through staff training or adapting pupils' individual curriculum pathways, the school places pupils at the heart of everything it does.
- Leaders rigorously check the school's work, and this has enabled them to identify necessary development points. Consequently, leaders have secured improvements since the last inspection. This is how, for example, a previous gap in English learning and the need for further accreditation for sixth-form students have been addressed. Leaders are not complacent and have an accurate understanding of improvements and, crucially, how to address these.
- Leaders and teaching staff check the quality of teaching against pupils' progress regularly. This inspires staff to refine and develop their teaching and assessment through well-planned support and appropriate training. Also, leaders constantly encourage staff to reflect and debate how to make further improvements in their practice. Consequently, the morale among staff is high.
- The curriculum is dynamic and promotes independent learning tailored to pupils' individual needs and interests. As well as English, mathematics and science, pupils actively take part in physical education and develop information and communication technology skills by using electronic devices. Pupils learn themed topics to boost their academic knowledge of other subjects, such as art, history and music, which adds breadth to the curriculum.
- The creative curriculum provides pupils with wide-ranging experiences. There is great emphasis on developing pupils' life and communication skills through their practical study about the wider world. Along with visits to places of interest, such as to the local shops and museums, pupils explore life in different countries using sensory methods.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective as it is interwoven into all areas of school life. For instance, pupils learn about current affairs so that they understand matters arising locally and nationally. This promotes pupils' understanding of fundamental British values, particularly the concepts of respect and tolerance. This, together with the individualised nature of the curriculum, prepares pupils well for the experiences and opportunities of life in modern Britain.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up premium, is used extremely well to support pupils in the classroom and to enable pupils to participate in additional activities. Special educational needs funding is used effectively, including to support engagement with external agencies and professional services.

- Parents are overwhelmingly positive and feel well informed about the school. Leaders recognise that further engagement with parents will maintain support for parents and high-quality outcomes for pupils.

Governance of the school

- Governance is extremely effective in securing the school's continuous development. Trustees and members of the local advisory body are committed and aspirational for the school to be a centre of educational excellence.
- Trustees and members perform their defined roles extremely well. Trustees are highly skilled and provide excellent strategic direction for the school. The local advisory body offers school leaders guidance that contributes to school improvement. Consequently, leaders at all levels are held accountable for their areas of responsibility, and this drives this successful school.
- Trustees meticulously check all aspects of the school's work and seek the views of pupils, parents and staff to inform them of the school's effectiveness. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and offer school leaders constructive advice to ensure that high standards are maintained. They are well informed and so hold school leaders to account with the utmost rigour. Plans are underway to further develop parents' engagement with the school.
- The school benefits from a wealth of expertise from members of the local advisory board. This has facilitated improvements, such as enhancing the teaching and learning of science at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are in line with recent government guidelines. Recruitment procedures are robust in order to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children.
- Staff are suitably trained and well informed about national concerns, including the possible risks associated with homelessness, radicalisation and extremism. Staff are aware of pupils' vulnerabilities and know what actions to take should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare.
- Leaders respond quickly to concerns that occur. Well-kept records confirm this. Effective partnerships with parents, carers and professional services ensure that leaders provide support for pupils and their families.
- The curriculum provides opportunities to help pupils develop a clear sense of possible risks to their safety. For instance, pupils learn about road safety and they are knowledgeable about not sharing their personal information while online. Parents also receive useful information to help them keep their children safe when using the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now excellent across all subjects and key stages. Pupils thrive because they receive high-quality learning experiences. A key feature of this is that teaching successfully embeds pupils' social, communication and independence skills throughout all aspects of their learning.
- All staff have high expectations of what pupils can do or achieve. Teachers, learning support assistants and therapists collaborate as they share the view that all pupils will achieve and develop lifelong skills. This promotes a cultural norm for pupils to be ambitious and acquire skills necessary for their future lives.
- Teachers know their pupils very well. Teachers' planning is suitably tailored to pupils' needs and interests, and focuses on developing skills appropriate for their independence. Resources and activities include interesting and real-life examples that engage pupils and boost their learning. The curriculum supports this, including in history, where teaching enhances pupils' sensory needs to explore the culture of different countries.
- Teachers' excellent understanding of special educational needs ensures that they reinforce key learning messages to enhance pupils' development. They make effective use of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets, to record progress and to identify pupils' next steps. Consequently, assessment is strong, and pupils make strong progress against suitable targets.
- Excellent relationships exist between staff and between teaching staff and pupils. This leads to a safe learning culture and an atmosphere of mutual respect. Pupils flourish as they receive first-rate support to achieve highly, irrespective of their learning needs.
- Teaching staff and therapists work in effective partnership with parents and carers. For instance, therapists support parents to enable pupils to use their communication devices and consolidate their learning while at home. A few parents expressed their enthusiasm for maintaining this engagement with the school to further support their child at home.
- Pupils make gains in their scientific knowledge, understanding and skills. Excellent use of partnership links to access professional expertise to enhance the teaching of science is in place. For instance, pupils undertake a project using suitable resources from a local university to address their personalised learning in science.
- Learning support assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and development. They provide excellent care and support to ensure that pupils are on task to meet their personal targets and planned achievements.
- Pupils receive rich opportunities to develop in English and mathematics. Practical tasks, such as measuring ingredients in cooking, support pupils' understanding of numeracy. The development of pupils' communication is firmly embedded throughout their learning. A strong use of communication aids, including electronic devices, allows pupils to share ideas and learn from their peers. However, some pupils with

appropriate capabilities do not receive enough opportunities to enhance their writing skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils show a keen desire to learn. A strong feature of the school's provision is the nurture and care pupils receive, which helps to build their self-belief. Pupils understand how to be successful learners because of the praise they receive from teachers, which recognises their developments. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning support their noticeable achievements.
- Pupils develop positive relationships and are thoughtful to others. Assemblies address a range of topics related to different cultures and promote positive attitudes. The school's council empowers pupils to have a voice in the school, as they regularly vote on issues such as which charity to support.
- Pupils enjoy exceptional support, which enhances their physical and emotional well-being. Robust systems and a multi-agency approach between therapists and teachers enable pupils to thrive. For instance, art therapy supports pupils' emotional well-being effectively. Similarly, using physical exercise in therapy helps to develop pupils' communication skills. This is showed by pupils learning specific words to indicate whether they would like to stop or continue with a physical activity.
- Bullying is extremely rare at this school and exclusions do not occur. Pupils say they feel very safe and well cared for by staff. Pupils learn how to be safe, through assemblies and firmly embedded teaching strategies. The school's '10 golden rules' ensure that the school adopts a consistent approach to keeping pupils safe. For instance, pupils receive encouragement to communicate 'stop', including using clear actions, should they need to.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are well mannered, respectful to adults and their peers and extremely welcoming towards visitors.
- Pupils conduct themselves extremely well during their lessons and around the school. A teamwork approach successfully manages any 'out-of-character' behaviour as the reason behind such behaviour is identified and swiftly addressed.
- Typically, the school's environment is calm, welcoming and purposeful. This contributes to the vast majority of pupils regulating their behaviour. Pupils show a strong sense of loyalty to the school and observe routines which support their learning.
- Attendance rates are slightly higher than those nationally for similar schools. Pupils enjoy being at school and show great enthusiasm when they arrive at school in the mornings. Leaders provide support and work closely with parents, carers and

professional services to reduce any persistent absence that may occur. Often, this is for medical reasons.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make rapid progress, from low starting points, in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Excellent teaching, specialist support and collaborative working by all staff are key features of pupils' excellent outcomes.
- Pupils across all year groups make consistently strong progress in their social development. This is because teaching takes into account pupils' personal targets, which are constantly reviewed, and new progressive targets are set. Almost all pupils meet expectations and often pupils exceed their targets because of the personalised support they receive.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve equally well in both English and mathematics. Following the last inspection, the school conducted extensive research to find out the reasons behind the differences in pupils' stronger outcomes in mathematics compared to English. This led to a change in teaching methods targeted at pupils with specific learning needs, which improved their skills and progress in English.
- Some pupils who have the appropriate ability fail to achieve highly in their writing due to missed opportunities to practise these skills.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Teaching focuses on promoting independence. Pupils achieve the necessary skills, both academic and social, for 'learning for life'. Pupils gain self-belief so that they approach their next steps with a sense of pride over what they have and can achieve.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Leadership of the 16 to 19 study programmes is highly effective. Individualised study programmes are relevant to students' needs and interests. There is a sharp focus for students on developing excellent social, communication and independent skills to support their future lives.
- The sixth-form provision mirrors the high expectations that leaders and the trustees have for all learners. The expansion of the study programmes since the last inspection has provided wider opportunities for students to gain accreditation. Courses tend to be more vocationally based rather than academic in order to suit students' learning needs. Despite this, learners achieve certification in a range of courses, including in literacy, numeracy and shopping skills.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are of the highest quality. Teaching staff create interesting and purposeful opportunities for learners to develop their mathematics and English skills throughout their study programmes. A cohesive approach with therapists promotes students' social skills, communication and self-confidence by engaging students in group discussions.
- Students make consistently strong progress from their starting points in a range of areas, including basic skills, independence and personal development. Rigorous checks

on students' progress against their EHCP targets show that most students progress swiftly to higher targets over time. A group of students particularly enjoyed their trip to a broadcasting studio because they enjoyed presenting in front of a camera.

- The sixth-form provision promotes students' personal development and welfare exceptionally well. This is evident in their cheerful manner, excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Students engage regularly in health and fitness lessons and learn to be safe, including while in the kitchen and when interacting with their peers.
- Students attend school regularly because they appreciate the meaningful and interesting experiences it provides. For instance, students have opportunities for daily independent living, such as managing money and travelling on public transport. Students have a strong moral purpose of duty towards others in the school and in the local community through their charity work.
- Careers guidance is highly effective. Students receive impartial advice about post-school placements and help to prepare for interviews. Excellent partnership arrangements with educational establishments, including regular visits to a local college, prepare students suitably for their post-19 education. Students, along with their families, are able to make realistic and ambitious plans for their future lives.
- Students' programmes of study include aspirational opportunities to develop rich and wide-ranging employment skills. Students' introduction to the world of work includes undertaking enterprise projects and running the school's tuck shop or café. During the inspection, sixth-form students served younger pupils at the café and gained essential skills in communication, organisation, preparing food and life skills.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. School leaders are proactive in designing transitional packages for individual students to get them ready for life after Moorcroft School. They escalate any concerns within the community, for example ensuring that wheelchair access is in place. Almost all students who left the school at the end of the 2018 secured a placement at college.

School details

Unique reference number	138158
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	10088794

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	20
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Barry Nolan
Headteacher	Andrew Sanders
Telephone number	01895 437 799
Website	www.moorcroftschool.co.uk
Email address	info@moorcroftschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 to 27 November 2014

Information about this school

- Moorcroft School provides an education for pupils with severe learning difficulties and complex needs. These include autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is one of seven schools which make up The Eden Academy Trust, which is a multi-academy trust. The school converted to academy status on 1 June 2012.
- The board of trustees has statutory responsibility for governance and is responsible for all aspects of the school, including the educational performance of the school. The local advisory body is a sub-committee of the board of trustees and offers support and advice to the school.

- The management of the trust consists of a senior leadership team responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the trust. The senior leadership team is comprised of the chief executive officer, director for academy development, director for finance and operations and regional directors for schools. The headteacher reports to the director of schools, who is line managed by the chief executive officer.
- The school uses two alternative providers: West Thames College (mainly attended by sixth-form students from the school) and RNIB Sunshine House School, which is also part of The Eden Academy Trust.
- Leaders have brokered the services of a careers guidance provider.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is slightly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. A high number of pupils come from families who speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning, across all key stages, jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' and students' work, their assessment and progress folders.
- Inspectors watched a video of sixth-form students conducting a presentation at a local broadcasting studio.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in both key stages 3 and 4 read.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, pupils, therapists, teachers and staff in various positions.
- Telephone conversations were held with a representative from the London Borough of Hillingdon, which refers pupils to the school, the chair of The Eden Academy Trust's board of trustees, together with one member of the local advisory body. An additional telephone conversation was held with another member of the local advisory body.
- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding procedures, the 16 to 19 study programmes and the school's self-evaluation. Information relating to the work of governance, pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour was also considered.
- There were no responses to the pupil survey, but inspectors spoke to three groups of pupils and sixth-form students, formally and informally, during their social times and lessons.
- There were too few responses to the Ofsted online parental questionnaire, Parent View, to be counted. The lead inspector spoke to a few parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Rosemarie McCarthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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