

INSPECTION REPORT

MOORCROFT SCHOOL

Uxbridge

LEA area: Hillingdon

Unique reference number: 102466

Headteacher: Ms M Geddes

Reporting inspector: Hilary Gannaway
OIN: 21527

Dates of inspection: 8 – 9 July 2002

Inspection number: 230129

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bramble Close Hillingdon Uxbridge
Postcode:	UB8 3BF
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Val Millar
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Moorcroft is a school for pupils and students with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and has an increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and sensory impairment. It caters for pupils and students between the ages of 11 and 19, mainly from Hillingdon and surrounding areas. Moorcroft is a campus school that shares its site with a mainstream primary and secondary school. The school has places for 80 pupils. There are presently 64 on roll, but this number is due to rise significantly next term. Twenty-one pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with the largest groups being of Indian and Pakistani heritage. Seventeen pupils have English as an additional language, with 13 at an early stage of language acquisition. All pupils and students have statements of special educational needs and their attainment is far below the nationally expected standards for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is excellent and the school is managed to the highest standards. All staff collaborate very successfully to ensure that all pupils and students have equal access to education and experience an excellent range of learning opportunities. The very good and sometimes excellent teaching, combined with high expectations, leads to pupils and students achieving very well and successfully gaining accreditation. As a result, they feel valued and have excellent attitudes to learning. Given the increasingly very complex needs of a significant number of pupils and students, and their high levels of achievement, the school gives very good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The quality of teaching is very good and has a major impact on the achievement of pupils and students.
- The excellent learning opportunities for pupils and students are appropriate for their age, and provide an increasing range of choice as they move through the school.
- The leadership and management of the school are excellent. Highly effective monitoring, review and self-evaluation ensure that the committed staff are continually seeking ways to improve the quality of learning.
- Inclusion is actively and very effectively promoted within the school and in out-of-school learning.
- There is very good provision for pupils' and students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This significantly contributes to their all-round development and excellent attitudes to work.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- There are no weaknesses of sufficient significance that they need to be addressed in an action plan.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the school was last inspected in December 1997 has been very good. There is now a wide range of parental links, including those to ensure that parents are aware of what their child is studying. Access to a variety of reading materials is very well provided for through use of the library and class book-boxes. The educational outcomes of all spending decisions are evaluated effectively to ensure that pupils and students benefit and to determine future priorities. Pupils' and students' statements of special educational needs appropriately reflect current provision. There have also been improvements in aspects that were previously good and very good. For example, all pupils now achieve very well, there is a higher percentage of very good and excellent teaching and a wide range of excellent learning opportunities. These improvements have been supported by the development of highly effective, well structured monitoring and review procedures, along with relevant professional development.

STANDARDS

The table below summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 9	by Year 11	by Year 14	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	A	<i>very good</i>	<i>A</i>
reading	A	A	A	<i>good</i>	<i>B</i>
writing	A	A	A	<i>satisfactory</i>	<i>C</i>
mathematics	A	A	A	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	<i>D</i>
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	<i>poor</i>	<i>E</i>
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A		

* *IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.*

All pupils and students, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, make very good progress towards their individual learning objectives. This is due to the setting of high quality, small-step targets for individuals, together with frequent assessment of their progress and well-focused support. This process helps to underpin the very good achievement of pupils and students in all subjects. Achievement in English is very good because communication skills are a priority across the curriculum. Staff are successful in ensuring that pupils and students have a range of alternative ways to communicate through signing, symbols and communication aids, and that they have the skills to use them. Pupils' and students' achievement is very good in personal, social and health education, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Most use information and communication technology skills confidently to access and use programs in a range of subjects. In Years 10 to 14, carefully graded accreditation and a very good work and life-related curriculum result in students leaving with highly appropriate national awards, such as the Transitional Challenge, the Youth Award Scheme and a progress file. The school sets whole school targets and this year they have been set for the first time using the P-scales.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are excellent. Pupils and students enjoy coming to school and concentrate exceptionally well, given their needs. They co-operate extremely well with adults, and are delighted to celebrate each other's achievements in the classroom and during assembly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in class and around the school, despite the challenging behaviour of some pupils and students. They are well mannered and helpful, and move between lessons in a calm and purposeful way.
Personal development and relationships	These are very good. The high quality of relationships ensures that pupils and students develop their confidence and self-esteem and become as independent as possible.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. There is no unauthorised absence. Pupils and students always come to school except when there are medical reasons to prevent it.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 14
Quality of teaching	Very Good	Very Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is consistently very good overall and this has a very positive effect on learning. It is very good in mathematics, including numeracy, and in science and personal, social and health education. It is also very good in English, food technology and information and communication technology lessons, where there were examples of excellent teaching. Teaching of communication skills is of the highest order. Teachers plan high quality lessons, such as those in literacy, to reinforce the use of signs, symbols and communication aids by pupils and students. This results in very good gains in their learning, with increasing confidence and independence as they become older. An excellent feature of most lessons is the care with which teachers and assistants assess the progress of individuals towards their targets. This allows staff to adapt targets and change planning and resources immediately there is a need. The ability of staff to do this ensures that all pupils' and students' needs are met very well and work is challenging. As a result, they remain interested in their work and have the best possible chances to progress. Relationships are very good and teachers have high expectations of pupils' work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Learning opportunities are excellent. The curriculum is broad and balanced with an appropriate emphasis on developing communication and choice. It meets the needs of all pupils and students very well and is appropriate for their age. All pupils and students have access to a rich range of activities including work-related projects and out-of-school learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	This provision is very good. The school identifies pupils' and students' needs and gives them individual help with communication so that all can access fully the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good and is effectively supported by an excellent personal, social and health education and citizenship programme. The school provides a wide range of activities, with many varied opportunities for social, moral and cultural development. Spiritual development benefits from regular, well planned assemblies in which all pupils and students take part.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements for the care and well being of pupils and students are very effective. Pupils' personal needs are well met, with minimal disruption to education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	These are excellent. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are highly effective and ably supported by the other members of the senior management team. They are very clear about the way forward for the school. All staff are enthusiastic and fully committed to improving opportunities for pupils and students.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governors have a very good overview of the school and developments. They do this through their very detailed work in committees that also include teachers and support staff, their involvement in the very comprehensive school improvement plan and by close budget monitoring.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has excellent high quality assurance procedures, which are closely monitored and include self-review. All information gained is used to guide improvement, so that pupils and students receive the best possible education.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources very well to support achievement. Spending is based on school priorities. The school ensures best value is achieved by obtaining resources at a competitive price. It also successfully consults staff, governors and parents about certain issues.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents feel that their children enjoy school.• The teaching in the school is good.• They would feel confident to approach the school with a concern.• The school is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents consider the range of activities outside school could be improved.• A few parents would like more homework.

The parents' questionnaire responses and those from the meeting were generally very favourable, with only a few minor concerns raised. The inspection team fully concurs with the very positive response from parents. Inspection findings show that, given the levels of need of some pupils and students, the school carefully plans and provides a very good range of suitable out-of-school activities. Homework is very appropriate, planned into activities and organised as often as possible.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of teaching is very good and has a major impact on the achievement of pupils and students.

1. The quality of teaching is consistently very good overall, and higher than at the time of the last inspection. At all stages, teachers take every opportunity to reinforce learning, and this has considerably aided improvement in pupils' and students' progress towards their annual review targets.

2. Based on a scrutiny of work and lesson planning, as well as lesson observations, teaching is excellent in information and communication technology (ICT), food technology and for English in Years 10 and 11. This is because teachers have a high level of subject knowledge as a result of well chosen professional development. Teaching of communication skills is of the highest order. This is because teachers plan high quality lessons, such as those in literacy, to reinforce the use of signs, symbols and communication aids by pupils and students. Through their increasing ability to communicate, pupils and students make very good gains in learning, along with increasing confidence and independence as they become older. Pupils and students with English as an additional language (EAL) particularly benefit from this emphasis on reinforcing communication in a variety of ways.

3. Detailed planning is undertaken with pupils' and students' individual needs in mind. Individual work combined with exceptionally well-planned and focused support results in their making very good progress towards their very specific individual learning objectives. These objectives are set in every lesson for English, mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE), ICT, food technology and during work for the Awards Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) for the Sixth Form. The assessment of these targets in each lesson is excellent. It is a significant strength of teaching and is completed by teachers and the highly skilled learning support assistants (LSAs). As a result, staff are able to adapt targets and change planning and resources immediately whenever there is a need. It ensures staff have a very strong knowledge of individual needs and how to deal with them so work is challenging and targets are very well met. This has made a very clear and considerable contribution to pupil and student learning, and helps to underpin the very good achievement of all across the curriculum. Pupils and students are aware that it is happening. In many instances, they are involved in their own self-assessment, which aids their understanding and self-esteem. Consistent feedback also ensures that pupils and students know how well they have done and what they need to do next. Those with additional needs benefit greatly from this approach as well as from support by teachers who are skilled in challenging behaviours and at integrating pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).

4. A feature of most lessons is the very good introductions and clear explanations of what will happen. This ensures that pupils and students know what to do and so start work confidently with no time lost. Very well planned tasks and appropriately paced lessons engage and motivate them to sustain concentration. Lesson changes are signalled very well. For example, in one Year 7 to 9 French lesson, the start and end of the lesson was signalled with a song, ensuring pupils understood when the lesson began and ended. There are high expectations of work and behaviour. Pupils and students respond positively to this because of their very good relationships with staff and a feeling of being valued. Teachers regularly set suitable homework to extend learning. Parents appreciate this as it gives them the opportunity to support their children's work.

5. Teachers often teach a very wide range of very complex groupings and they manage this exceptionally well. They make sure all are challenged but in an atmosphere where humour is used to enthuse pupils and students and raise self-esteem. Praise is used very well. Pupils and students are left in no doubt when they have behaved or worked well, and they enjoy celebrating each other's success, often by clapping and laughing.

6. Well-trained learning support staff work extremely well and consistently with teachers to ensure pupils and students are focused on their learning. Their very good contribution is highly valued by pupils, students and teachers. What occasionally weakens otherwise satisfactory and good lessons is that there are not always enough LSAs, and those pupils and students with more complex needs are not consistently targeted and lose concentration as a result. This is a rare occurrence. Practically all lessons proceed at a very good pace, with frequent changes of activities to keep pupils and students interested so they concentrate and behave very well.

7. English is consistently very well taught because teachers are confident practitioners with recent training in literacy. Pupils and students respond by being confident learners who are motivated to achieve very well. In one excellent Year 11 lesson, pupils were helped to join in because they were given objects to handle and adults worked closely with those with greatest need. The very clear goals assisted them to follow instructions very well. They listened carefully, sustained eye contact and, with support, made significant gains when they correctly used and read the key words.

8. In mathematics, planning often reflects the numeracy strategy very well, with teaching very effectively focused on working towards pupils' individual learning objectives. Mathematical vocabulary is explained and reinforced very appropriately so pupils are confident to use it. In one very good lesson for a group of Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils, for example, previous teaching ensured that they used terms such as first, second and third correctly during the mental mathematics starter activity. A higher achieving pupil was then able to recognise this sequence when pointing out the order of the counters on the board in the snail race.

9. Information and communication technology (ICT) lessons provide excellent support for ICT skills across the curriculum, giving pupils and students the confidence to use programs and equipment to support their work in a range of subjects. In one excellent Year 9 ICT lesson, pupils produced and presented a multi-media presentation on Africa. Wider learning is also enhanced by the practical nature of lessons. In food technology, for example, pupils and students work as independently as possible. They often demonstrate activities to others, as in a Sixth Form lesson where one student showed others how to use an electric whisk to blend their ingredients.

10. The end result of very good teaching throughout the school is that pupils and students build up a range of highly relevant national awards and certificates before they leave school.

The excellent learning opportunities for pupils and students are appropriate for their age, and provide an increasing range of choice as they move through the school.

11. The school caters for pupils and students from the age of 11 to 19 who have an increasingly complex range of needs. It meets the challenges that this involves very well by providing a very good, broad and balanced National Curriculum for school age pupils. The curriculum is taught in separate key stages, with students aged 16 and over having a distinctive curriculum suitable to their needs as young adults. This is a distinct improvement since the last inspection when there was little difference with the work set for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

12. However, the school considers that pupils and students need to participate in an even wider range of learning opportunities than those provided by the National Curriculum. Since the last inspection, it has ensured this by very successfully devising a range of excellent experiences in a variety of settings. This is also strongly supported by comprehensive curriculum and timetabling arrangements whereby pupils of secondary age receive lessons in a range of settings focused on meeting their individual needs at each key stage. For example, they are placed in groups according to their level of attainment for language, mathematics, French and PSHE. For most other subjects, they work with others of the same age in classes of mixed ability. Creative subjects, leisure and physical education are taught across the key stage so that pupils and students can integrate with those of a different age when experiencing a range of activities such as drama, media studies, swimming and horse riding.

13. There is a very clear rationale for what is taught which is well thought out to meet all needs. It includes very clear planning for progression as pupils and students move through the school. For example, while pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow the National Curriculum, they also have the opportunity to start the ASDAN Key Steps programme in PSHE where the emphasis is on decision making. This provides pupils with opportunities to think about their own learning. During Years 10 and 11, pupils continue with a similar curriculum but with the emphasis on more vocational learning, completing accreditation for the ASDAN Transitional Challenge. Students in Years 12 to 14 build up their vocational accreditation by spending more time on the ASDAN Towards Independence programme and the Bronze Award. This is combined with a detailed and relevant core curriculum comprising English, mathematics, ICT, PSHE and food technology that runs throughout the school. The core curriculum ensures that basic education and life skills are successfully reinforced to support learning and independence.

14. A key focus has been to extend the range of learning opportunities to match pupils' and students' ages and levels of maturity. There are very clear expectations that all will do homework, and this is well integrated into the curriculum. Appropriately finished homework that successfully extended classroom activities was a notable feature of the work seen in evidence. As pupils are taught in subjects, they often move between lessons as they would in a mainstream school. They do this with the minimum of fuss and in a calm manner, becoming accustomed to changes of location, teacher and subject.

15. Other successful age-related experiences are provided through a curriculum that ensures activities are matched to needs while remaining similar to those of mainstream schools wherever possible. This is exemplified particularly well in English. For example, one parent who has another child in a mainstream school was delighted that both were reading *Goodnight Mister Tom* and could watch the video together. The excellent PSHE programme, which includes citizenship, challenges pupils and students to think about others and how to communicate their own needs. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is also incorporated in many other activities, ensuring pupils gain in confidence, self-esteem and independence skills. Work related learning and careers education are organised so

that pupils and students successfully experience appropriate activities as they become older. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 go on work related visits to places such as restaurants and stables. Students in Years 12 to 14 complete work related experiences focused on their individual needs. Some are helped to observe and assist in the workplace, others take part in work simulation during a *Can do day*, and higher achieving students complete work experience in other establishments. Their transition from school is very well supported by these learning experiences, advice from the careers service and a weekly college link that maximises independence and an understanding of life after school.

16. Educational visits provide further opportunities for pupils and students to participate in a range of activities similar to others of the same age. For instance, they visit museums and art galleries, and the theatre to see *Twelfth Night*. Pupils and students experience high quality learning in other school settings. Integrated learning for art, design and technology and physical education and out-of-school learning activities across a range of subjects are accomplished with the local school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). There is also a Summer Action scheme undertaken at the local secondary school, where pupils and students have access to a range of activities. Residential visits are provided so that pupils and students have opportunities to practise skills learnt at school in a different setting, such as the Blue Peter Log Cabin. All pupils and students take part in a community programme where they are trained in how to travel independently and interact with the local community when they go to shops and use leisure facilities.

17. Choice is carefully and thoughtfully extended as pupils and students become older to mirror mainstream options as closely as possible. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 choose from leisure options. Those in Years 10 to 11 extend this with a further choice of subjects, from humanities, music and art, taught in modules as they would be in a mainstream school. In the Sixth Form, students have the same choices, together with choices in their ASDAN work and subjects taught at their weekly college courses. Pupils and students know that these experiences are similar to those in mainstream schools, and this promotes their self-esteem and independence.

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. Highly effective monitoring, review and self-evaluation ensure that the committed staff are continually seeking ways to improve the quality of learning.

18. At the last inspection, Moorcroft was judged to be a very good school with strong and effective leadership provided by the headteacher. Since then, very effective action has been taken to secure further improvements. The leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are now excellent, and there are a number of reasons for this. They work exceptionally well together as a team, complementing each other with their particular skills, and other members of the senior management team ably support them. Decisive leadership has ensured that, from a very good base, there has been a marked and continuous improvement in many aspects of the school. This has not just involved those areas identified as key issues. It has also included the curriculum, precision planning for individual needs in core subjects, the quality of teaching and standards of pupil and student achievement. These improvements are due to a commitment to ensuring that all pupils and students are included in all aspects of school life and have opportunities to work with their peers in other schools, college and during out-of-school learning links, so that they receive the best possible education.

19. Developments are supported by excellent management procedures. These include clear, detailed policies and structures to support the work of staff. A range of well-targeted, accessible resources gives staff the means and confidence to fulfil their roles and successfully raise standards.

20. The headteacher has a thorough overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the way forward. This is due to her detailed observation of lessons, monitoring of planning, reviewing of the evaluation by staff of developments during the year, and an overview of pupil target setting. The monitoring of teaching is exceptionally well supported by the school's own 'Excellent Teaching Policy' to which all staff contributed. Major developments are particularly closely monitored and evaluated. For example, when the school changed its signing system, teaching was comprehensively evaluated by the deputy headteacher to ensure consistent use.

21. The senior management team includes the Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Sixth Form department co-ordinators. They meet frequently and work together to promote and raise standards. Much of this is achieved through comprehensive review and very well structured self-evaluation. The school has developed an excellent range of detailed monitoring procedures in which all staff are very effectively involved. All information gathered is monitored for its effect on pupil and student progress, and used as a basis for further improvement so that all receive the best possible education. For example, subject co-ordinators comprehensively monitor and audit their subjects, with the emphasis on evaluating the effect on pupil and student achievement and how they can ensure further progress. The teachers who co-ordinate core subjects do this particularly well by evaluating the previous year's developments before determining future priorities.

22. Teachers and LSAs are involved in as much discussion as possible. The detailed schedule of meetings ensures that all staff have a very good understanding of the school's aims and priorities and have the opportunity to contribute to them. Staff, governors and parents are consulted about how they feel the school is progressing. For example, parents are asked to complete a yearly questionnaire that is then evaluated and acted on. They have a high opinion of the school leadership and believe that all staff do their best for their children.

23. There is a very well constructed and detailed school improvement plan that results from all these evaluations and consultations. It strongly reflects school priorities by focusing on developing better provision for pupils and students. The plan is regularly reviewed by staff and governors, which further strengthens their contribution to whole-school developments and an understanding of ways to develop the education of pupils and students. It sets out clear strategies to implement change that are very strongly linked to pupil progress and school improvement. This is helping to drive developments in all areas of the school.

24. Governors have a very good overview of the school. Time has been spent since the last inspection developing their role and, as a result, they feel valued and are confidently beginning to evaluate their contribution to the school. Governors monitor the progress of developments through regular governing body meetings, high quality reports from the school and by working closely with the headteacher. There are a number of relevant committees, a strength of which is that they all contain representatives of a range of school staff, not just teachers. Governors find this invaluable as staff feedback is very helpful in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning, regularly contributing to and monitoring the school development plan, always acting to support improvement.

25. Since the last inspection, the school has made sure that money is carefully spent on high quality resources by evaluating all spending for its effectiveness in supporting pupils' education. The finance committee oversees the budget closely and reviews the cost effectiveness of spending decisions, their impact on education and the resulting future spending needs. As a result, the school uses its resources very well to support pupil achievement.

26. Staff feel that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are positive, approachable and that they support staff well. Staff consider that talents and skills are recognised and utilised well through the excellent review structures. This has led to increasing responsibilities being given to LSAs so that teachers can concentrate on the quality of teaching. All staff are highly committed, involved in performance management and encouraged to look at their professional development in terms of school needs. For example, focused training for learning support assistants in areas such as literacy and autistic spectrum disorders has boosted their confidence when working with pupils and students with more complex needs. Appropriate training for teachers has resulted in their being positive in their teaching and subject management roles, resulting in pupils and students developing a wide range of skills.

27. Team work is a strength between teachers and LSAs. It effectively ensures pupils and students learn and become confident and as independent as possible. The systems in place encourage all staff to be proactive in the pursuit of the best possible education for all. As a consequence, there is an excellent commitment to promoting the learning and life chances of each pupil and student.

Inclusion is actively and very effectively promoted within the school and in out-of-school learning.

28. The headteacher and staff have a very positive attitude to inclusion. It is seen as an important part of the school philosophy that pupils and students should have equal access to activities within the school, in other schools and colleges where appropriate, and within the wider community. As a result, the school has developed a number of different ways to ensure that all pupils and students are appropriately included in these activities.

29. In school, the emphasis on inclusion is achieved by an initial thorough identification of pupils' and students' needs. The setting of very specific and highly relevant individual learning objectives follows this assessment. As a result, barriers to inclusion are pinpointed and plans made to overcome them. This ensures that pupils and students are involved in the curriculum at all times and staff have the means of measuring progress accurately.

30. One of the challenges for the school has been to integrate pupils and students with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and PMLD into age-related classes for many of their curricular and out-of-school activities. This they have done very successfully. Recently the school has taken in an increasing number of pupils and students with sensory impairment and autistic spectrum disorder. The continued integration of pupils and students with a range of increasingly more complex needs is a strength of the school, providing all with an equal opportunity to share and experience all activities. All have benefited from this development, which aids the very good progress that pupils and students make.

31. A total communication environment fosters access to the curriculum. There is very comprehensive use of signing, symbols, pictures and communication aids to support learning and assist interactions during lessons. Recently all staff have received appropriate training to ensure consistency in the use of signs and to encourage pupils and students to sign back. Observations during the inspection show that this is successfully in place, so

that pupils and students have a means of communication that ensures they understand, join in lessons and miss very little of what is going on. Resources are often made to suit individual needs, further supporting the ability of each to communicate effectively and access all curriculum activities offered.

32. Information and communication technology (ICT) is becoming a normal part of everyday learning experiences. Considerable financial investment has gone into making sure there is suitable access for all. It is seen as an important priority to make sure that pupils and students can use a range of alternative devices such as touch screens, special switches and tracker balls, so that they can use programmes in a variety of subjects. There is excellent ICT teaching, a very good range of resources, and opportunities to extend ICT skills at another local special school, and after school. This means that the use of ICT, both through the use of alternative devices and familiarity with skills needed to access programmes, is very much part of everyday experiences. Pupils' and students' skills have improved markedly. This has opened up a varied range of learning experiences so they can make the best possible progress.

33. Resources on their own are not enough to ensure pupils and students are fully included in all aspects of school. It has therefore been a priority to train LSAs so that they play an integral part in supporting learning. As a result, they give invaluable help to teachers and very relevant and focused support to pupils and students. For example, two assistants have recently trained in autistic spectrum disorders and one is completing a sensory impairment course. Consequently, pupils' and students' needs are very well targeted so that all, including those with additional needs, progress very well in all aspects of their schoolwork.

34. Inclusion is very well extended for older secondary age pupils and Sixth Form students through a very good work-related curriculum. They learn about the challenges of the wider world through work shadowing, simulation, visits and work experience. All students, including those with PMLD in Years 13 and 14, attend a local college of further education where they have opportunities to integrate socially with others during breaks.

35. Pupils and students are increasingly having opportunities to work with pupils from nearby schools, particularly the local secondary school for pupils with MLD where some pupils are already taught. This integration is very effectively managed so that pupils have both social and academic links and benefit very well from the challenges, experiences and access to further accreditation. The headteacher of the school for pupils with MLD considers there are benefits for both schools. This is because Moorcroft pupils interact well with the other pupils, who also respond in a positive manner. Pupils from Moorcroft learn skills needed to work in a different environment very quickly so initial support can be lessened and sometimes withdrawn as they gain in confidence. One pupil has already gained a Certificate of Achievement qualification in design and technology through the link. As a result, both schools are very positive about extending collaboration.

36. Other opportunities for pupils and students to work with their peers include the well regarded out-of-school learning programme that takes place at both special schools, either before or after school. Pupils from the local primary school are now joining in these activities, which presently include art, food technology, ICT and reading. The Summer Action programme at the local comprehensive school provides the opportunity for pupils and students from Moorcroft to sample sporting activities alongside those from mainstream schools.

There is very good provision for pupils' and students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This significantly contributes to their all-round development and excellent attitudes to work.

37. There is a firm emphasis on pupils' and students' personal development so that they identify and have the opportunity to gain skills they will need when they leave school. It underpins much of what goes on in school, successfully aiding and enhancing learning. It is strongly supported by an excellent PSHE programme, which includes citizenship and emphasises self-advocacy, self-esteem and independence through work on ASDAN key steps and key decisions. Personal development is further supported by planned use of self-assessment so that, whatever their ability, individuals know what they have achieved and what they need to do next.

38. Very detailed behaviour intervention plans are written for those who need them. Observations show that these plans have a significant effect because they are implemented consistently. They support all aspects of pupils' and students' personal development very well. They set out clear, positive step-by-step techniques that are understood by staff and parents, who can therefore work consistently together to support the individuals concerned.

39. Provision for spiritual development is very well enhanced by carefully planned assemblies. They provide opportunities for pupils and students to experience a range of faiths and cultures, and to enjoy the regular celebration of their efforts and achievements. They appreciate these events, are delighted to be praised and proud to be a valued part of the school. During one excellent assembly on celebrating diversity, all pupils were well supported in trying on clothes, tasting food and identifying textiles from different countries. As a result, they took part in learning activities while performing to a wider audience. The end-of-day act of worship gives pupils and students time to reflect on what has gone on that day when they repeat or sign a prayer before going home.

40. Social and moral development is promoted very well because the school is a socially inclusive community. There is a clear emphasis on mutual respect. Many examples were seen of pupils and students waiting while others took their turn in communicating. The high quality teaching of communication skills very effectively underpins pupils' and students' social development by giving them the means to engage in interactions. To support this, teachers ensure that there are frequent planned opportunities for pupils and students to comment positively on each other's efforts, which they were pleased to do. For example, in one Year 10 English lesson, pupils praised another who demonstrated ballet steps during a lesson on *Amazing Grace*. This motivated pupils to remain engaged on their work, promoted excellent attitudes and contributed well to their self-esteem. In food technology, pupils and students respond well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and encouragement to do things independently. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and stories in English are used constructively to help them understand right from wrong. Opportunities are created for pupils and students to help each other and to co-operate. For example, in one Year 11 religious education lesson, one pupil shared her symbols with a lower achieving pupil to help her focus and remain on task. At the end of the lesson, one pupil carried the bags of two less mobile pupils as they changed classrooms. Very good relationships and attitudes are being further enhanced by the creation of a new student council.

41. Lunchtime in the hall is a pleasant experience for secondary age pupils. It is very well organised, with the emphasis on independence and self-management. Each class takes responsibility in turn for setting tables. The Sixth Form students have separate age appropriate facilities where they choose where to sit, often eating food that they have cooked themselves in food technology. There is an emphasis on self-help wherever

possible, though students are keen to help each other, for example by pouring out the water. Social responsibility is extended through visitors from organisations such as Age Concern, and by collecting for charities such as multiple sclerosis and dystrophy and supporting a disabled child abroad.

42. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils and students to interact at break. For secondary age pupils, there is a very good range of appropriate outdoor apparatus and equipment, such as bikes and scooters, to encourage them to mix. This is supported by supervising staff. Sixth Form students have their own social room where they communicate and listen to music. Social development is also aided by increased opportunities to interact with those from other schools and the local college through integrated placements and visits.

43. Cultural development is very well built into planning, with pupils and students celebrating religious festivals and cultural diversity during assemblies and religious education. Pupils and students consider their own and other cultures during French lessons, and during experiences such as a multi-sensory version of *A Winters Tale*, visits to Hampton Court, during work with visiting artists and while watching Russian song and dance. Multi-cultural development is well supported in music and art, where pupils make African masks, in English where they read *Journey to Jo'burg*, and in food technology where they make a variety of foods from different cultures. The school is mindful of its significant ethnic minority and has a range of resources and books in other languages to support them.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

44. Minor issues identified by the team and the school are already incorporated in the school improvement plan.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. There are no weaknesses of sufficient significance that they need to be addressed in an action plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	11	12	1	0	0	0
Percentage	23	35	39	3	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one three, percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	64
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	7
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	43
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes:****Y 7 – Y 14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.6
Average class size	8.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:**Y7 – Y 14**

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	616.5

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1,068,812.00
Total expenditure	1,047,095.00
Expenditure per pupil	16,360.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	70,865.00
Balance carried forward to next year	92,582.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

64
33

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	21	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	52	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	39	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	52	6	0	3
The teaching is good.	73	24	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	61	33	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	27	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	33	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	67	33	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	73	27	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	33	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	33	15	0	6