

Moor House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125454
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315237
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Vivien Wilton-Middlemass
Principal	Mrs Hilary Dobbie
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001
School address	Mill Lane Hurst Green Oxted RH8 9AQ
Telephone number	01883 712271
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

All pupils at Moor House have a statement of special educational needs relating to speech, language and communication difficulties. The pupils, all of whom board, are drawn from the United Kingdom and the vast majority are of White British origin. Ten per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority groups including Black African, Caribbean, Asian and Chinese. None have English as an additional language. Boys outnumber girls by a ratio of approximately three to one. The school is a member of a local schools federation and recently gained the Healthy Schools Award. It is in the earliest stages of seeking specialist schools status. The present headteacher was appointed four terms ago and there is currently an acting head of care.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Moor House is a good school with outstanding features. The pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent enabling them to make good progress and achieve a wide range of accreditation on leaving school.

The pupils' behaviour is excellent. They know about staying healthy, enjoy their lessons, and feel safe in an environment where they can learn and have their special educational needs addressed.

The teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well. They plan lessons with a very strong emphasis on effective communication and first hand experience. Relationships with staff, including boarding staff are excellent. The headteacher has improved the analysis of assessment data, which the teachers now put to good use. Vocational programmes, work experience and attendance at local colleges of further education prepare older pupils very well for leaving school. The good accommodation helps the teachers to meet the pupils' academic and therapeutic needs. The curriculum, including after school boarding activities, is broad and highly relevant to their needs. However, a small number of pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have access to a modern foreign language as required by their statements of special educational needs.

The overall quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is excellent. Since the headteacher's arrival, communications between education, care and therapy staff are much improved. School procedures ensure the pupils are as safe as possible. They receive excellent support, including speech and language therapy to improve their communication skills and occupational therapy to help them to access all opportunities provided. Medical and counselling support are also very effective in ensuring the pupils' welfare.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher has shown excellent leadership since arrival and with her team has ensured good improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher and senior staff have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness due to improved use of data analysis. Increasingly, subject leaders are using this data to plan further developments. The newly appointed acting head of care is overseeing effective progress in meeting the requirements of the last Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) inspection. The school surveys staff, pupils and parents to gain their views of what works well and areas for improvement. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The governing body and trustees give excellent support on personnel, pupil welfare and finance issues although their role in systematically evaluating pupils' achievement requires further development. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The boarding provision is good. Despite being in post only a short time, the acting head of care shows good leadership and management and is well supported by other care staff and the rest of the school's senior management team. The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools and in some cases they are exceeded. Good progress has been made towards addressing the few recommendations from the last CSCI report of June 2006. All care staff have been trained to NVQ Level 2 in the administration of medication. Information concerning pupils' cultural needs has been acquired and is now being integrated into their individual placement plans.

The pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and enjoy the excellent sports and activity facilities that are available within the school. These include swimming, football and trampoline. A member of staff helps pupils to create a development programme that is improving their fitness. The school's curriculum also helps as it includes a comprehensive 'Life Skills' element, which extends from day school to after-school activities.

The school takes care to ensure that pupils receive a healthy diet that includes choice. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and consistent. Staff have received training, which is constantly updated. New staff who join the school follow a rigorous induction course. Discussion with pupils and observation of them around the school during the day and in the early evening clearly shows that they enjoy being at Moor House. Pupils say that there is no bullying. They make a positive contribution to their own and the local community, a feature described as outstanding in the last CSCI report.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide modern foreign language teaching to those pupils whose statements require full access to the National Curriculum.
- Extend the analysis and use of assessment data across all subjects and more fully involve governors and trustees in its evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' achievements are good because they receive good quality education, therapies, care and support. Given the nature of the pupils' special educational needs, the standards attained are well below average. However, the pupils make good progress according to their abilities.

At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve passes in a range of GCSE subjects including, English, mathematics, science, art and design, history, and design and technology. Success is also achieved in Entry Level Certificates in the same range of subjects with the addition of food and media studies. Pupils attain vocational awards from Bronze to Platinum level by gaining qualifications accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).

The pupils make good progress towards targets in their individual education plans (IEPs.) The school's analysis of results shows no significant difference in achievement between any of the different groups of special educational need, race or gender.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

By the time the pupils leave school they are well prepared for the future. During lessons, breaks and visits off-site they behave excellently. Both they and their parents report that the school is a safe place to be where incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are very rare. Pupils' expressions and general manner show they are pleased to be at school and are well prepared for learning after enjoying breakfast. They readily exchange greetings with peers and staff. The pupils show considerable care, concern and respect for their peers and no one is made to feel undervalued or bullied. This is particularly so during the first weeks of a new year when homesickness is most likely to be evident. Attendance is excellent; absences are invariably due to medical treatment.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They discuss and celebrate music, cultures and the faiths of others. In lessons, they show a clear insight into moral and cultural issues. Their overall contribution to the community is outstanding. For example, they support their local village fete and also raise money for various local and national charities: some of these ventures are as a result of their initiatives. Older pupils represent the school very well at college and on work experience.

They know that they should be eating healthy food and learn about safety around the school. For example, despite the temptations offered by new play apparatus, the pupils respected the need not to use it before it had been formally risk assessed. Some older pupils have responsibilities, for example, escorting visitors around the school, membership of the school council and giving presentations. All are expected to be responsible for managing their school work and for keeping their bedrooms and residential areas tidy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers and teaching assistants have a very good knowledge of the students' needs and preferred learning styles and reflect this in their planning. Particular strengths also include specialist subject knowledge, signing, and integrated specialist input from therapists to consolidate learning and promote effective communication.

Good account is taken of pupils' prior attainment when setting learning groups. The teamwork between teachers and other staff is strong. Weekly planning meetings between education, care and therapy staff ensure that everyone is thoroughly briefed before lessons and assists with assessment. The teaching assistants are well trained and take on teaching roles under the guidance of experienced staff.

A priority is placed on communication and practical experiences. For example, one teacher encouraged debate between groups of pupils about historical perspectives of the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War. In design and technology, pupils fully understand the link between thorough planning and achieving successful outcomes. Typically, the right balance is provided between allowing time for answers and covering the content. Pupils receive explicit praise for taking the time to compose their thoughts and phrase their answers. Occasionally, the pace of lessons is slower than the pupils require and this limits the amount of learning possible.

The use of digital photography and video to record achievement is well established and the use of interactive whiteboards is increasingly effective. Some staff create specific resources to aid communication and all learning aids are of good quality. The staff also make good use of the school's excellent swimming pool and sports hall to engage the pupils in regular exercise to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has maintained the strengths identified in the last inspection. There is a strong focus upon literacy and numeracy in all subjects in addition to personal, social, health and citizenship education. A well-planned vocational programme including work experience makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. The school continues to

provide a broad curriculum relevant to the needs of the pupils. However, some pupils' statements of special educational needs require full access to the National Curriculum, including a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3, which the school does not provide.

In Key Stage 4 the curriculum retains the same strong focus on communication and the development of academic subjects and increases the amount of vocational education and preparation for life after school. Accredited ASDAN modules, mini-enterprise projects and regular attendance at two local colleges of further education supplement the schemes of work and develop decision-making and independence.

Several features of the after-school curriculum have a very strong impact on the pupils' academic and personal development. These include, mealtimes, a wide range of sporting activities, work towards Duke of Edinburgh Awards, supported homework and visits to the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for pupils is excellent. Arrangements to keep them safe are robust. The health and safety of the whole school community receives meticulous attention. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken, child protection procedures are well understood and boarders are provided with healthy activities and diets. Sensitive induction procedures help to reduce homesickness.

The school deploys its therapy resources very well. The full-time nurse, counsellor and arts psychotherapist provide excellent support for all pupils' medical and emotional needs. Annual reviews involve all professionals, fully include pupils and parents and result in well-focused intervention and guidance to meet their individual targets.

Careers education and guidance are well established so that pupils are very well prepared for the future when they leave school. Relationships with other agencies, including residential care workers, therapists, medical staff, external services and careers advisors, are excellent.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Several added comments via their pre-inspection questionnaires. These included, 'we don't feel any other school could meet his needs...the headteacher and staff are hardworking, dedicated and approachable...we are made to feel welcome at any time despite the distance we live from the school'. A small minority of parents felt that communications could be better and the school is looking at ways to improve this even further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

In the four terms she has held the post, the headteacher has shown excellent leadership and management. With good support from her senior leadership team and staff, the school has made good improvement and has demonstrated that the capacity for further improvement is also good.

One of the main challenges since her arrival has been to establish improved use of assessment to provide a more accurate view of pupils' progress. This improvement is evident in the most recent data analysis and planning for school improvement. A survey of all stakeholders' views shows that staff believe there is now a shared vision and improved communications.

Essential staff re-structuring is nearing completion and has resulted in a greater clarity of role and the inclusion of all departmental leaders. The school has good systems to induct new staff and all benefit from performance management.

Subject leaders, notably in history, increasingly undertake evidence gathering for self-evaluation. Monitoring procedures give the school's management an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Increasingly good use is made of expertise held by governors and trustees who provide effective support for premises and personnel issues. They receive good reports from the headteacher yet their role in monitoring academic achievement is not given a high enough priority in school improvement planning. Financial matters are well managed and audited.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Moor House School, Oxted, RH8 9AQ

Thank you for helping my colleague and me get to know your school last week and for giving us such a warm welcome. I am pleased to say that you go to a good school. Some things are outstanding, especially your personal development and well-being.

The headteacher leads the staff very well and they all work very hard for you. The teachers and teaching assistants make sure you have good lessons that help you to learn in lots of different ways. The quality of therapies you receive is excellent. Your personal development is outstanding as a result of the school and boarding staff supporting you to improve your communication skills and become much more confident.

Good lessons, time at college and exam success prepare you well for leaving school. You get on well with the staff and do your very best to see that everyone can get on and learn in class. I was impressed by the way you look after each other in the playground and know how much are looking forward to playing on the new play equipment!

Swimming and games lessons help to keep you strong, fit and healthy. Your school meals are especially healthy and, it is clear, tasty too! You obviously enjoy your lessons, especially using computers and practical subjects. I am asking the headteacher to do two things to improve the school even more. One is to consider providing lessons in a modern foreign language for some pupils in Key Stage 3 and the other is to extend the ways in which all staff and governors can tell just how well you are doing.

I wish you lots of luck in the future and thank you once again for allowing me to see just how well you are doing.

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector