

Moorcroft School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102466
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	335907
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	67
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Deborah Wiseman
Headteacher	Ms Joy Nuthall
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven teachers were seen. Seven lessons were observed in depth and snapshot 'learning walks' were conducted alongside the school leaders. The inspectors saw an assembly, two rebound therapy sessions and part of the school sports day that took place during the inspection. Meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of written information including data files, curriculum planning and School Improvement Partner records. In addition, a sample of pupils' work was scrutinised and 48 staff questionnaires, 17 parental questionnaires and 12 pupil questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils achieve in the different core subjects, and in each key stage
- how well the school provides for pupils with challenging behaviour and visual impairment
- how well staff track pupils' progress and use these data in lessons
- the extent to which the school promotes community cohesion and equality of opportunity, especially through mainstream opportunities.

Information about the school

Most pupils who attend Moorcroft School live in the London Borough of Hillingdon, and a few live in other neighbouring authorities. The pupils come from a wide range of ethnic heritages, although just under half the pupils are White British and a third are from Asian backgrounds. About one pupil in three speaks a language other than English at home. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Two thirds of the pupils have severe learning difficulties, while the rest have profound and multiple learning difficulties. A small number of pupils in addition have more complex difficulties such as autism or medical conditions. The school achieved Healthy School status in 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Moorcroft School is a welcoming and happy school in which pupils behave well and enjoy attending. As one parent said, in a comment typical of many, 'This is a wonderful, happy school. As soon as you come in you pick up the good vibrations.' The pupils and parents are especially pleased about the kindness and sense of security that the staff provide. There is very high quality care, guidance and support for all pupils, and especially those who have additional, complex medical or sensory needs.

Pupils achieve a satisfactory level in their subjects and course programmes because of a good curriculum and satisfactory teaching. They make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy and pupils leave the school at post-16 with suitable qualifications and a sound preparation for life. Although some aspects of the teaching are good, teachers are not always effective in helping all pupils to learn quickly. In some lessons, the teacher's expectations are too low, pace is slow and the work is unchallenging. One reason behind this is that teachers, including those in the post-16 provision, do not yet have precise information about the previous progress that pupils have made so that they can move pupils on to the next level quickly. The school fully recognises this problem and last September introduced a new system to track pupils' progress that has proved successful in other similar schools. It is still too early for the impact of this system to be reflected in the overall quality of teaching and in raised levels of achievement.

Strengths in teaching include very positive relationships which make pupils feel exceptionally safe at school, and excellent management of behaviour, especially for those pupils who can be unpredictably aggressive. The curriculum effectively supports pupils' good personal development and practical skills. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme pervades much of school and classroom life, and has been particularly important in helping pupils gain an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy life. The school provides a good range of appropriate programmes for pupils aged 14 to 19, with suitable vocational options.

The headteacher leads the school from the front in her commitment to provide the best possible outcomes for pupils. She is particularly successful in ensuring that all staff foster and maintain very strong relationships with the pupils' families. The school has a sound understanding of its own strengths and shortcomings, although staff do not have at their disposal the most accurate information on pupils' achievements. The school intends to enhance its bank of information by the new, improved approach in evaluating the progress of individual pupils and different groups of pupils. There is good teamwork among senior staff to support school improvement. A track record of satisfactory academic achievement, with good personal outcomes and sound self-evaluation, shows

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that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all lessons are at least satisfactory and most are good or better by January 2011 by:
 - ensuring that all lessons move at a good pace
 - ensuring that activities are always well matched to the needs and capabilities of all the pupils
 - raising expectations of the levels pupils can reach.
- Improve the use of assessment and the quality of the school's self-evaluation by:
 - implementing planned improvements to the pupil tracking system
 - providing staff with accurate data on pupils' achievements
 - identifying more accurately whether any pupil or group of pupils underachieves
 - setting challenging targets for every pupil.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Progress is satisfactory overall for all groups of students in English, mathematics and science. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the very positive relationships and constant encouragement from staff meant that pupils' enjoyment of school was clearly evident, and they approached the activities with a great deal of enthusiasm. In one lesson, pupils loved watching slides of their football heroes on a giant plasma screen while being encouraged to shout out, 'England! England!' during a sensory story based around the World Cup. Broad smiles and exuberant vocalisations attested to their delight.

Pupils behave well in lessons, where they work hard and want to do well. Progress slows and, in a small minority of cases, is inadequate where the activities are relatively undemanding, or the pace is slow. Even in these situations, pupils show forbearance and politely wait for things to pick up. Sensitive classroom support means that pupils who have additional difficulties such as visual impairment or challenging behaviour make the same progress as others. Pupils make good progress in communication because staff sensibly make a priority of constantly encouraging pupils to communicate, both in lessons and throughout the day, using additional means such as signing, symbols or electronic devices. Pupils at post-16 achieve satisfactorily in the accredited programmes which they undertake.

Pupils attend well and are punctual to lessons, making the most of their learning time. They are often supportive of one another and rarely show irritation or unkindness. In this very positive atmosphere, it is unsurprising that pupils feel very safe at school.

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Pupils have a great enthusiasm for living in a healthy way, as shown by their delight and appetite for sporting events during sports day and very high uptake of healthy lunch options. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community, eagerly taking on responsibility, for example as members of the school council and for delivering registers.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Staff ensure that classrooms, right through to post-16, are safe, supportive environments that are conducive to learning. In most classrooms, teachers make sure that there are interesting, lively activities in lessons that bring learning to life. New technology, such as plasma screens, is used well to provide for those who learn best through visual media. Most staff have a good knowledge of how to accommodate individual pupils' specific difficulties and adopt specialised curriculum approaches, such

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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as using symbols and signing for those who have difficulties in communication. Staff provide very effective support in lessons for those with significantly different needs, such as pupils with visual impairment and challenging behaviour. In some classrooms, however, teaching is not so effective and lessons are not planned well enough to bring out the best in the pupils. Overall, learning and progress are satisfactory, rather than good, because teachers do not have available detailed tracking data on the progress that pupils have made in the past and what they can expect to achieve in the future. Although daily assessment gives teachers a good understanding of the pupils' current levels, lessons do not always provide enough challenge to help pupils to move forward as quickly as they could. In a very small minority of lessons, there is inadequate challenge and expectations are too low.

Staff ensure that classrooms, right through to post-16, are safe, supportive environments that are conducive to learning. In most classrooms, teachers make sure that there are interesting, lively activities in lessons that bring learning to life. New technology, such as plasma screens, is used well to provide for those who learn best through visual media. Most staff have a good knowledge of how to accommodate individual pupils' specific difficulties and adopt specialised curriculum approaches, such as using symbols and signing for those who have difficulties in communication. Staff provide very effective support in lessons for those with significantly different needs, such as pupils with visual impairment and challenging behaviour. In some classrooms, however, teaching is not so effective and lessons are not planned well enough to bring out the best in the pupils. Overall, learning and progress are satisfactory, rather than good, because teachers do not have available detailed tracking data on the progress that pupils have made in the past and what they can expect to achieve in the future. Although daily assessment gives teachers a good understanding of the pupils' current levels, lessons do not always provide enough challenge to help pupils to move forward as quickly as they could. In a very small minority of lessons, there is inadequate challenge and expectations are too low.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Although leadership, management and governance are satisfactory overall, leadership by the headteacher is good. She is ambitious for high achievement and is well aware of the need to improve the school's ability to track pupils' progress and to set achievement

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targets based on well-founded baselines. The school knows that this is the important missing key to driving improvement. However, budget and other difficulties have meant that the school has not moved forward as quickly as it would have liked to.

Some aspects of leadership and management have moved on significantly since the last inspection. Safeguarding procedures and systems are all of very high quality. The partnership with parents is extremely strong. There is very strong attendance at all school events, particularly the improved parents' evenings, with chances for pupils' siblings and parents to experience school through their children's eyes. The school's person-centred approach to annual review meetings, although time consuming, has meant that parents have a vivid understanding of what their children have achieved and how they can support learning at home.

The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well within school, but it has found it very difficult to find individual learning opportunities in mainstream schools in order to promote pupils' social development. There are good partnerships and links with outside institutions and businesses such as the British Airports Authority (BAA) and the local rural activities centre. The senior staff have carried out a detailed audit that shows that community cohesion is promoted well, for example through the pupils' good awareness of other cultures, the innovative family learning sessions and the 'Let's get cooking' club.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Teachers working in the school's post-16 provision give timely support to pupils to

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achieve appropriate accredited qualifications and prepare themselves for the future. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although pupils make good progress in developing the social and other skills that they will need in order to lead more independent lives. Pupils clearly enjoy the community learning programmes that include how to make choices, how to improve the environment and how to run mini-enterprises. Pupils participate fully in the school's council and provide good role models to younger pupils through their involvement in the rest of the school community. Relationships are very strong and pupils at this stage behave in a responsible and mature manner. Satisfactory leadership and excellent care ensure that the environment is safe and welcoming. Good links with college providers effectively enhance the good range of programmes offered.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who completed the questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. They particularly appreciate how their children enjoy school and are kept safe, and the support to encourage healthy living. As one parent reported, 'My daughter has spent many happy years here, even though she has serious health issues. If she needs to be taken to hospital, the teacher always stays there and waits for us to come, so that she does not feel alone.' A very few concerns were expressed, largely about whether enough progress is being made and whether children were well prepared for the future. The findings regarding these concerns are reflected in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Moorcroft School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 65 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	71	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	65	5	29	1	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	41	7	41	2	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	47	4	24	3	18	1	6
The teaching is good at this school	8	47	5	29	3	18	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	29	9	53	3	18	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	53	6	35	1	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	35	7	41	1	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	47	6	35	3	18	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	29	9	53	1	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	35	8	47	2	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	41	7	41	1	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	53	6	35	2	12	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Moorcroft School, Hillingdon UB8 3BF

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing some of your lessons. Your school is a satisfactory school, with lots of interesting things for you to do. Those who lead the school work hard to keep developing the school. Teachers do a satisfactory job and help you to make satisfactory progress in your lessons. We saw how you really enjoy your lessons, work hard and always try to do your best. We were particularly impressed by your very good understanding of how to live a healthy life, and how you threw yourselves into all the activities during your sports day.

You take your responsibilities seriously, such as being on the school council, and you and the staff get on very well together. Their excellent care and guidance make you feel very safe and behave well. You are very kind to each other and this makes the school a happy place in which to learn.

There are a few things that still need to be done. We have asked your school to improve by making sure that:

- there is fast pace in lessons, activities that match what you need and high expectations from the teachers
- teachers know exactly how you have performed in the past and what can be expected of you.

We are sure that you will help your teachers by working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee

Lead inspector

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