

INSPECTION REPORT

**INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 162A
OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002**

REPORT REFERENCE NUMBER: SIS/162A/2006-7/08

Name of school:	Moordale Academy
DfES Number:	806/6001
Focus number:	213
Inspection team:	Lead Inspector: Mr N Grenyer Supporting Inspector Mrs Meg Buckingham Lay Inspector: Mr Mike Thomas
Dates of inspection:	30 April to 3 May 2007

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of the school: Moordale Academy

Address of the school: Sotherby Road,
East Middlesbrough Industrial Estate,
Middlesbrough,
Cleveland TS3 8BS

Telephone number: 01642 224960

Fax number: 01642 249926

Proprietor: Northumbrian Education Trust

Name of Chief Executive Officer: Mr Adrian James

Name of senior teacher: Mr Steven Waugh

DfES number: 806/6001

Focus number: 213

Type of school: Independent school affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust

Age range of pupils: 11 – 17

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Number on roll: Full time: 24 Boys: 12 Girls: 12

Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need: None

Number of Post 16 students: 3

Type of inspection: Section 162 (A) of the Education Act 2002

Inspection team: Lead Inspector: Mr Neville Grenyer
Support inspector: Mrs Meg Buckingham
Lay inspector: Mr Mike Thomas

Date of inspection: 30 April - 3 May 2007

Date of issue of this report: 30 May 2007

Report reference number: SIS/162A/2006-7/08

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 162(A) (1) (b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Service and the Focus Learning Trust (FLT) and agreed with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector who looked at agreed aspects of the regulations. The lay inspector also evaluated both the Trustees' stewardship of resources and the ethos of the school and reported on these in an internal report to the FLT; his findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

Information about the school:

Moordale Academy is a small independent day school for boys and girls aged from 11 to 17. It is situated in the North Ormesby area of Middlesbrough and serves pupils from the Middlesbrough area and from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It was originally established as a tutorial centre to provide guidance and tuition for young people of compulsory school age who were otherwise being educated at home. It was first inspected in September 2004 on its current site, and fully registered by the DfES in November 2006.

At the time of the inspection, the school had 24 pupils on roll (12 boys and 12 girls) of whom 3 were students in Year 12. There were no pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN) but the particular needs of individual pupils were well catered for.

The school's prospectus gives the general aim of providing a secondary education, specifically '*to provide students with a well-balanced and fulfilling education, to bring out the potential of each student, and to promote respect for authority, other persons and their property and the ability to get along with others*'. The Trust's objectives are '*to provide a Christian based secure and stimulating environment for students to learn in, in order to help them to emerge as self-disciplined young adults who have learned to apply themselves diligently and to enable them to embark upon their chosen vocations equipped with a broad base of knowledge, training and skills*'.

Summary of main findings

Moordale Academy achieves its general aims very well. It has developed from its origins as a tutorial centre to being a successful school, providing a very good education for its pupils and students. The curriculum provided is carefully constructed to meet the school's aims; a particular feature across the curriculum is the emphasis on learning how to learn. The teaching is good. Pupils are very well known to the staff; their behaviour is outstanding and the relationships between staff and pupils and within the school are excellent. It is well led and enjoys the support of parents and families and of the FLT. The school meets all the requirements on welfare health and safety, which it takes very seriously.

NOTE ON THE TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT

Throughout this report the word 'pupil' is used to describe young people in years 7 to 11. The word 'student' is used exclusively to describe those studying in Year 12 and beyond.

What the school does well:

- it provides a very good education for pupils whose strengths and weaknesses it knows very well;
- its pupils' behaviour is outstanding and relationships are excellent;
- its pupils respond very well to the good teaching and make very good progress;
- it achieves its aims; and
- it receives first class support from its volunteers.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

- ensure that details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year are included in the prospectus; and
- ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all new staff appropriate checks must be carried out to confirm their identity and medical fitness, and such information taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA):

The school complies with the requirement of the DDA (2002).

Next steps

Although not a requirement, the school might like to consider the following suggestions as it seeks to develop its provision:

- review its special educational needs provision and the balance of withdrawal and in-class support;
- consider extending the provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE) for all age groups; and
- make arrangements for the refresher training of the Child Protection Officer (CPO) within the required time scale.

Distribution of this report

This report is being sent to the chief executive officer (CEO) and senior teacher of the school. The CEO is asked to ensure that copies are made available to parents of all pupils and students. In addition, it is being sent to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills through the Independent Registration Team of the DfES, to the Trustees of the FLT and to its Regional Trustee, to members of the SIS team and to the members of her Majesty's Inspectorate in OFSTED charged with monitoring how the SIS conducts its inspections. The FLT has established a website upon which this and other similar inspection reports will be placed. Details can be found at the end of this report.

PART TWO: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The Moordale Academy curriculum meets all the requirements of the current regulations. It is delivered effectively. The school's prospectus gives the general aim of providing a secondary education, specifically:

- *'to provide students with a well-balanced and fulfilling education,*
- *to bring out the potential of each student,*
- *and to promote respect for authority, other persons and their property and the ability to get along with others'.*

The Trust's objectives are *'to provide a Christian based secure and stimulating environment for students to learn in, in order to help them to emerge as self-disciplined young adults who have learned to apply themselves diligently, and to enable them to embark upon their chosen vocations equipped with a broad base of knowledge, training and skills'.* The school is largely successful in achieving all these aims.

The curriculum statement outlines the rationale behind the school's allocation of subjects to each class and year group. Analysis of the school's curriculum at all key stages shows that pupils are provided with appropriate experience and opportunities to learn and to develop their proficiency in languages, mathematics, human and social skills, and physical education (PE). At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils study English, mathematics, science, French, design and technology, history, geography, Bible Studies, office skills and typing, PE and citizenship. Currently Years 9, 10 and 11 have no personal, social and health education (PSHE), but Years 7 and 8 do follow the Focus Trust's own PSHE programme.

Pupils at KS4 study a good range of subjects at the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level, including mathematics, English, science, French, geography, history, design technology, citizenship and business studies. The curriculum has no specific art coverage, but there are numerous aesthetic and creative opportunities, and all pupils have the opportunity to study music. The school has very detailed provision for pupils with learning difficulties. Well-kept records show that there are effective individual education plans devised for these pupils.

The Year 12 curriculum achieves the aims and promotes the values of the school by providing a substantial vocational experience. All students are expected to continue their studies into Year 12, including a course leading to the British Technological Education Council (BTEC), National Award in Business and a Pitman's City and Guilds course in Business English and a course in Accounts. Additional breadth is provided by the inclusion of courses on typing and office skills, music, PE and Bible Study, alongside design and technology, citizenship, current affairs, and an option of textiles on one day a week. All pupils have an appropriate programme of work on the single day that they are not in school. Careers guidance is provided through their Year 12 courses.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons is good or very good and never less than satisfactory. During the inspection, the professional inspectors observed 27 lessons, including

two of Bible studies, both of which were observed by the lay inspector. Lessons were observed in all subjects of the curriculum except for music and PE, and each year group was visited.

Lessons are well organised and the purpose of the work is made clear to pupils. Classes are orderly. In the very best lessons, teachers use effectively a variety of teaching methods so that pupils not only learn the subject matter, but also gain skills in how to learn. The pace is appropriately brisk and the work challenging, based on the teacher's good knowledge of pupils' previous attainment. As a consequence, pupils of all abilities make good and very good progress. In history, Year 9 pupils prepared presentations to explore different points of view about the Treaty of Versailles. Working individually and in pairs, pupils confidently presented their arguments to each other. They use the criteria for assessment to evaluate effectively the level of work both for themselves and each other. The task was carefully matched to challenge the most able and ensure progress by pupils of all abilities. In the satisfactory lessons while pupils are aware of the topic they are not always fully engaged or given sufficient opportunities to contribute and develop their own thinking. Questioning is such that it does not always allow pupils to give extended answers and their progress is lessened. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their work, are attentive in class and behaviour is very good. When the teaching is particularly stimulating, as for example in a French lesson, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is infectious and pupils respond eagerly. The lively pace, very good use of resources, especially of the material displayed liberally all round the room and the well placed encouragement enables pupils to make good progress in their spoken French while enjoying and participating fully in the lesson.

Resources are good and support learning effectively. The refurbishment of the library is part of the school's development plan over the next academic year. Classroom displays celebrate pupils' achievements and, for example in science and history imaginatively evoke the topics; the solar system and satellite technology, and major events in the 20th century respectively. In the French room, a well-presented and carefully arranged display of key words and phrases provides good support for pupils to recapitulate and extend their vocabulary. The good quality design and technology work displayed in the corridors and the items made in textiles illustrate pupils' good creative skills.

Assessment and recording of pupils' progress is developing well. Pupils are tested on entry and information from previous schools and other education provision gives a useful baseline. Throughout the school year, assessments and examinations provide further information on pupils' progress. A more systematic approach to recording pupils' progress has begun. Integral to this is a tracking system designed to monitor pupils as they move up through the school. This is helpful in bringing together all the current data from the variety of external and school-based testing and other assessments, and a useful picture is emerging of the progress of each individual. Although in its early stages, this has already influenced planning and is informing the programme of work for individual pupils, especially for those who require extra support. Targets are set in several subjects, for example, English and history, so that pupils are aware what they are aiming for and are helped to make progress. Older pupils say they find this particularly helpful when linked with the requirements of the GCSE. Pupils are made aware of the levels and attainment criteria set out in the National Curriculum, and some subjects, such as design and technology, history and English, use them to good effect in order to develop skills in self-evaluation. Pupils' work is marked regularly. A recently implemented whole school policy on marking, displayed around the school, gives pupils and teachers clear definitions of what each grade means. While generally thorough, marking does not always include comments so that pupils are clear about how they might improve their work.

Being a small school, teachers and volunteers know each pupil well and have a good understanding of individuals' learning needs and are dedicated, as stated in the school's aims '*... to bring out the potential of each student...*'. No pupil has a statement of special educational need although nearly half of the school has been identified as having some degree of learning difficulty from spelling to more specific learning problems. Progress is carefully monitored through effective individual plans, and support staff use a wide variety of strategies and materials. Once assessed on entry, a pupil usually remains on the learning support list throughout their time in school. Careful on-going assessments ensure that the support continues to match pupils' current needs. The additional help is in almost all cases provided in a dedicated room on a one-to-one basis between pupils and enthusiastic staff, most of whom are volunteers. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. The number of support lessons for each pupil varies over the week. A consequence is that the small numbers in classes become smaller when pupils are withdrawn for support and this disrupts the curriculum. When the whole class is taught together teachers provide effectively for pupils of varying abilities and they make good progress. Help in additional lessons is given not only in literacy and numeracy but also in skills to help pupils learn, for example in the organisation of work. Those pupils not identified for extra support do not systematically receive the benefit of such study skills sessions across all subjects. Pupils of all ages speak highly of the extra help they receive. One older pupil stated '*I don't know what I would have done without the support...*'

Recently the school has become aware of the need to seek further ways to meet the needs of its more able pupils. A promising start has been made by the coordinator to inform staff through useful newsletters and further training is planned.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Moordale Academy is owned and maintained by the Brethren, a Christian faith community with distinctive beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to make presentations to the rest of the class in many subjects. These are always applauded and this does much to improve pupils' self-confidence.

The school has a checklist to monitor pupils' responsibilities. The School Council minutes show that the agenda includes items of great importance to the school and its pupils. New furniture and decoration of the pupils' common room, tidiness in and around the school grounds, the installation of a fish tank in the school's reception area, and going to another local school's facilities to practise for sports day are the items on the most recent agenda. Checks against previous items on the agenda show that most recommendations of the school council have been carried out. This is a very effective organisation which is successful in encouraging pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, to show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute to community life. Pupils appreciate the School Council's work.

Moordale Academy, through Bible study, citizenship and PSHE seeks to provide pupils and students with an understanding of the distinction between right and wrong, and to develop appropriate moral attitudes and behaviour. Consequently pupils and students demonstrate a very strong sense of right and wrong through their behaviour in and around the school. Specific opportunities for this development whilst at school derive from a range of lessons and activities, including Bible studies and the citizenship course.

The provision for citizenship is, overall, very good, and it provides pupils with a broad knowledge of public institutions and the law, and of institutions and services.

Pupil and parents' questionnaires show that while most were satisfied with the range of extra-curricular activities, there was a substantial minority (over a fifth of returns) that asked for more, especially in the way of geography field trips. The school is conveniently placed to visit the north-east coast as well as more local features. Plans are under way to go to the Lake District and visits have already been made to Tynemouth Priory, Newcastle Keep, the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, to the Houses of Parliament, the Middlesbrough transporter bridge, and to the local observatory, which was used as the basis for an excellent lesson.

The school assists pupils to acquire an appreciation of their own and of other cultures as part of its monitoring and self-evaluation. It has produced a cultural awareness grid showing where in its curriculum, the work of other cultures is encountered and appreciated. This ranges from poetry from other cultures including Pakistani and Indian in English, coverage of slavery and the holocaust in history. Specific work on the diversity of cultures in citizenship is expanded in Bible Studies to include coverage of the Jewish religion and the history of the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of pupils

All of those involved with the school are mindful of the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The necessary policies are in place and are based on the FLT documents. All the regulations are met. Safeguarding pupils' welfare is taken seriously and is an integral part of the caring ethos of the school. The name of the child protection officer (CPO) is on display for pupils. The refresher training for the CPO will be due shortly and arrangements to attend a course at an appropriate level should be made as a matter of urgency. The school is taking steps to become aware of the new requirements for safeguarding children and safer recruitment guidance from the DfES (January 2007). Health and safety procedures are implemented diligently and a range of ongoing checks, including thorough risk assessments, are undertaken for educational visits, as well as those regarding fire precautions. The Trustees have prepared a suitable outline plan to fulfil their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. First Aid arrangements are in place. The school's high expectations of personal conduct are clearly understood and pupils respond with excellent behaviour and get on well together. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. They are based on courtesy and often with much good humour. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel comfortable, which contributes to their overall good progress. Pupils know that there are adults to whom they can go if they have a concern and many say they would readily do so. Attendance is good, on occasions reaching one hundred percent. Admissions registers and daily attendance registers are kept in accordance with the regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Records show that all teaching staff, volunteers, supervisors and Trustees have been carefully checked through the Criminal Records Bureau for their suitability to work with children. Staff files are maintained in an orderly manner but contain only some of the required information. Details of staff qualifications and individuals' employment history are available. No records are kept to show that the necessary checks to confirm identity, verify qualifications, character references and medical fitness have been completed. The school has recently received relevant documentation

from FLT and plans to put these procedures in place to remedy the shortcomings for the forthcoming appointments of new staff.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets with all but one of the requirements.

If the school does not meet the requirements for registration, what must be done to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, make appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and take these into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed. (paragraph 4(c))*

5. Suitability of the Premises and Accommodation

The premises occupy a compact site in a suburban district of Middlesbrough and have been converted from a previous business use. They provide satisfactorily for all school needs, including a hall for PE, and an outdoor grassed area, which provides space for a five-a side football pitch. Specialist rooms are available for science, design and technology, music and PE. These facilities are generally of good quality, although the limited size of the space has some impact on the range and scale of work that can be undertaken.

Overall the buildings are well designed to cater for the needs of the school. These buildings include a space dedicated for the support of pupils who experience particular learning needs. This is an aspect of the provision which demonstrates the school's serious commitment to further raising the attainment of all pupils. All the school's premises are showing a high level of decorative order and are maintained in a scrupulously clean and tidy manner.

Although there are no pupils currently who require special access facilities, the design of the main building pays close attention to the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 and the school is fully accessible should the need arise. The school's plans for providing further improvements to meet with such a need are highlighted in a way which is entirely appropriate.

The quality of furnishing in the school is high and suitable for pupils of all ages. Classrooms, including the rooms for science, and design and technology, are well furnished. Floors throughout the school are carpeted except where more robust provision is required, for example the hall and the workshop. This results in attractive learning spaces throughout the school which provide a positive support to the generally high quality of teaching seen during the inspection week. The quality of learning spaces is further supported by good displays, including of pupils' work especially in French, science and history. The school has adequate outside space including a small grassed area. Pupils make good use of the playground for relaxation and games during good weather and this facility is augmented by use of the hall for football during lunch breaks. Pupils generally behave maturely during breaks. The school could provide some more opportunities, for example indoor games and clubs, for pupils and students to use their time productively or to engage in quiet games during these times. Year 12 pupils have exclusive use of a separate classroom.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents

The school provides a very good range and quality of information for parents in relation to the life of the school, the wide variety of interesting activities undertaken by their children and in relation to its policies and procedures. The prospectus provides a helpful outline of how the school functions, with further amplification in the handbook given to parents when their children join the school. This provides very helpful information about the curriculum. It sets out clearly the school's expectations for behaviour and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Both the prospectus and the handbook are well produced giving clear information not only about the school, but also about the Trust and policies followed in the administration of the school. The prospectus does not currently contain details of the number of complaints received during the previous year.

Annual reports of good quality are sent to all parents on pupils' and students' attainment and effort. The reports contain teachers' comments on what has been achieved and provide appropriately clear detail about what pupils or students need to do to improve the standard of their work together with targets for next year. Mid-term reports give marks out of ten for all subjects alongside brief comments from the teachers and the senior teacher. Monthly newsletters are prepared by Year 12 students. In questionnaires completed prior to the inspection parents indicated that they feel that teachers have appropriately high expectations of what their children can achieve and most feel sufficiently well informed about their child's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all the requirements except one.

If the school does not meet the requirements for registration, what must be done to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *include details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year in the prospectus (paragraph 6(2)(j)).*

7. The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school uses the standard complaints procedure adopted by the FLT and authorised for use in its affiliated schools. The prospectus issued to all parents clearly states that, on request, a copy of the complaints policy is available from the school. This document also includes a brief summary of the complaints procedure. Questionnaires completed by parents prior to the inspection indicated that most of them understand clearly the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART C : THE QUALITY OF ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002. The Lay Inspector evaluated both the school ethos and the Trustee's stewardship of resources and produced an internal report for the Focus Learning Trust, which is summarised below.

The school is governed by a board of seven trustees including the CEO. The Board meets regularly and meetings are minuted. Mostly trustees have a good understanding of their responsibilities. The board does not currently conduct a regular annual review of its operations and achievements against its aims.

The CEO and the senior teacher have a very good working relationship. There is a high level of input to management from some other trustees and valuable support from volunteers from the community.

The CEO has an effective overall control and delegates well. He would benefit from more reporting back from managers.

The senior teacher is experienced, caring, diligent and respected. The school would benefit from formal weekly or fortnightly meetings of a management team. Overall, there is a well-ordered and friendly atmosphere in the school.

Can the organisation and management be improved?

There are three areas for improvement which the school Trustees might like to consider:

- *the board should conduct a regular annual review of its operations and achievements against its aims;*
- *the CEO would benefit from more reporting back from managers; and*
- *the school would benefit from formal weekly or fortnightly meetings of a management team.*

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust. Further copies of the report are available from the Operations Manager of the Focus Learning Trust, Siskin House, Siskin Drive, Coventry CV3 4FJ or from the Schools Inspection Service website: Schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk