

Meadowside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105133
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336430
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Terry McKenzie

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	77
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoffrey Gubb
Headteacher	Miss Paula Wareing
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at learning and inspectors visited 12 lessons. Eight teachers were observed and meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors looked at the school's work and scrutinised policies, the school improvement plans and 21 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- the effectiveness of teaching and assessment on students' achievements
- the impact of curriculum on developing students' basic skills
- the effectiveness of senior managers and the governing body in changing and improving the school.

Information about the school

Meadowside educates students with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most have profound and multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties. An increasing number experience autistic spectrum disorders and social, emotional and behavioural challenges to their learning and all have a statement of special educational needs. Most students enter school at age 11 and continue to age 19. A few leave at the end of Key Stage 4. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups; none are looked after and almost half are eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved and maintained the Healthy Schools award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Meadowside is a good school that provides outstanding care to its students. It is supported by the great majority of parents, carers and staff and held in high esteem by the local authority. Students enjoy coming to school; they attend as regularly as they can given their medical difficulties and they feel very safe. One representative comment from a student was 'The best thing about Meadowside is the other pupils!' High levels of staffing and the skilled support of adults ensure that most students behave very well and make good progress. The system for recording and tracking learning demonstrates that, from low starting points, consistent progress is made across all areas of the curriculum. Students achieve well when compared with others in similar schools. Consequently, they gain confidence in the use of literacy and numeracy and are prepared well for the future. Students know how to stay healthy and despite their difficulties make an excellent contribution in school and to the community. Older students achieve well in their work-related learning as a result of effective partnerships established with businesses, other schools and colleges. Staff work hard to provide opportunities for students to practise and demonstrate good social skills, such as during lunchtimes. Most students begin to know about right and wrong. They follow the code of conduct and many are successful in starting to understand and manage their own behaviour. Students are sympathetic to each other and provide high levels of support for others, for example through the school council.

Teaching is good and since the time of the last inspection assessments have been used more effectively to help understand students' individual learning needs. However, better use of assessment information remains to be made so that lessons can provide more-focused targets for students. The good curriculum is appropriate to the individual requirements of most students and is successful in helping improve basic skills. However, although students in Key Stage 4 and post-16 gain qualifications, there are not enough curriculum pathways to accredit their efforts.

The school uses every opportunity to communicate extremely effectively with parents and carers and this helps maintain above average levels of attendance. The headteacher has been in post since January 2010 and has made a good start. Senior leaders are well supported by an enthusiastic and proactive governing body. As a result, the school understands well its strengths and weaknesses; it knows how to improve and has a good capacity to sustain these improvements. Although there is a clear vision for improving all aspects of school life, insufficient use is made of new technologies and other resources to aid learning and to help disabled students participate in lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Further improve students' achievements through setting lesson targets for individuals.
- Improve the curriculum further by providing older students with more choices.
- Help students engage in lessons better by modernising and improving resources.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students enjoy lessons and contribute as well as they can. They listen carefully to the adults and to each other in class. Most take pride in their work and finish tasks to the best of their ability. Students make gains in literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Consequently, they pass externally accredited courses such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and entry level. Because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, students' attainments are not graded but all groups make good progress and all are included according to their ability.

Students report that they feel very safe in the school. This is confirmed by the responses of parents and carers in the questionnaires. Students say that they trust the adults to sort out any difficulties. Their behaviour is managed well and, consequently, is exemplary in classrooms and around the school. Students are polite and welcoming to staff, visitors and each other. Through regular exercise and healthy school meals they begin to adopt healthy lifestyles. In lessons they learn about keeping away from harm and maintaining good health.

Students make a superb contribution to the life of the school. The vibrant school council is instrumental in making changes to lunch menus and to physical activity programmes. In classes students willingly take on responsibility and they interact very effectively with members of the community. For example, students have performed outside school and used other fundraising initiatives to purchase a new minibus. They also participate in a wide range of projects with other local schools and colleges.

Older students undertake supported work experience and many attend additional courses elsewhere to gain qualifications such as GCSE. All have opportunities for off-site education and these experiences contribute to the outstanding development of social and moral education. Classes undertake visits to cultural centres and places of worship to become more familiar with people from different religions and cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and is mostly good. This is because teachers know students very well and plan tasks to match their ability. Teachers are supported by well-trained and skilful classroom assistants and a good variety of learning activities occur to maintain interest and engagement. Teachers record students' achievements into the school's assessment system and take note of students' levels during their lesson planning. However, planning does not always provide clear learning targets based on good-quality assessment information. This results in students not being sufficiently or accurately challenged.

Students in Key Stage 3 follow courses that are linked to the National Curriculum and adjusted well to their levels of ability. The curriculum for older students is appropriately designed to foster confidence in living skills and to help prepare them for moving on to the next stages of their lives. The extensive work-related learning programme ensures that they gain experience in the workplace and in colleges of further education. All classes have regular assemblies with opportunities for religious themes and for reflection, while personal, social and health education provides the support that students need to learn to care for themselves.

Students' welfare is at the heart of everything that Meadowside stands for. The adults work closely and effectively with therapists, medical professionals and others such as welfare officers. Consequently, the care and support offered to students is outstanding and makes a great contribution to the amount of time that they can spend at school and in the classroom. Similarly, the very effective guidance provided to Key Stage 4 and post-16 students ensures that they receive the best possible advice about leaving school

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and moving on to the next stages of their lives. For example, last year all of the young people went on to education, training or employment and this is a remarkable achievement for a school of this nature.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The new headteacher has made a good start on improving learning through raising the status of the assessment system and encouraging teachers to use it more effectively. Senior managers scrutinise the assessment data and curriculum planning regularly to ensure that all students have access to learning, make appropriate progress and that none are discriminated against. They have established plans for further improvement and they are beginning to monitor and evaluate the work of the school to good effect. For example, it was decided that students would benefit from a wider range of off-site activity and, consequently, a new school minibus has been ordered. These examples show evidence of good capacity to sustain improvement. The governing body is enthusiastic and supportive of the school and it has proved that it can be decisive in taking actions to ensure the well-being of students and staff. For example, governors were instrumental in ensuring that the temporary headteacher's post was made permanent earlier in the year. At the time of the inspection all policies and procedures were in place to ensure that students are safeguarded and the required checks are carried out on staff. Appropriate training has been completed by designated safeguarding staff and good links are maintained with the local authority safeguarding board. School managers demonstrate good knowledge and experience in these issues. Meadowside links well with the wider community and ensures that students, as far as they are able, understand about maintaining good relations with others. Contacts are maintained with schools locally, nationally and overseas. The curriculum teaches students about civic responsibilities and respecting the law. Parents and carers are engaged productively with the school so that they understand about the education and care undertaken during the school day. Teachers make the best use of the resources available to the school, for example in using communication and mobility aids, and Meadowside provides good value for money. However, many information and communication technology items are out of date and lacking in effect. For example, interactive whiteboards are difficult for students with mobility aids to access and the boards are rendered ineffective by large patches of shadow.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students in the post-16 provision receive individual learning programmes according to their need. However, attention remains focused on developing skills in communication and numeracy together with those required for moving on to the next stages of their lives. Good progress is maintained throughout the post-16 provision and students have good opportunities to gain further ASDAN and National Open College Network (NOCN) qualifications, undertake work experience and study at other schools and colleges. Post-16 provision is soundly managed to ensure that all students are supported and cared for well. The school is very successful in ensuring that all have an appropriate place to go to upon leaving Meadowside.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Twenty-one parents and carers returned questionnaires and the great majority agree

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with the inspection team that their children enjoy school, are very well cared for and are extremely safe. Many took the trouble to write supportive comments about the staff. One typical comment was: Meadowside staff are excellent. My son is very happy there and all of his medical and educational needs are very well taken care of.'

A few of the returns indicated concerns about behaviour management in the school and this was checked carefully during the inspection. However, the team found no evidence of this. One or two parents and carers reported that the home–school diaries were not used as effectively as they could be. For example, most carry comments each day about care and support but very little about educational progress. The inspection team agrees with parents and carers in this respect and pointed out the concern to the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Meadowside 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 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	52	9	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	52	10	48	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	62	8	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	48	8	38	2	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	62	8	38	0	0	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)	10	48	8	38	0	0	1	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	62	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	62	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	48	10	48	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	52	9	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	67	6	29	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



08 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Meadowside School, Wirral, CH49 5LA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and watching you in your lessons. I particularly liked meeting the school council and listening to their views and comments.

Meadowside is a good school and these are some of the things that we found during the inspection.

You enjoy going to school and attend as well as you are able. You work hard in lessons and make good progress. Your behaviour is very good indeed and you are very polite to staff, visitors and to each other.

The teachers and classroom assistants in the school work hard and look after you very well. They produce good lessons with many interesting things to do. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are also doing what they can to make sure that you get the education and care that you deserve. You have many good opportunities outside of school and Meadowside works very well with your parents and carers.

We think that the school could be even better. For example, you could make even more progress if teachers set clear lesson targets for each of you. We would like to see more opportunities and choices for older students to gain qualifications and credits. We think that some of your equipment is becoming out of date and should be replaced as quickly as possible to help you with your learning.

We wish you all the best for the future and once again thank you for your help and interest in the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Terry McKenzie

Lead inspector

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