

Meadowside School

Pool Lane, Woodchurch, Wirral, CH49 5LA

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most students make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. Many make outstanding progress in their personal development. Progress is equally good for different groups.
- The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection, particularly for older students. They are able to achieve external awards in a range of subjects which are well matched to their interests and abilities.
- Overall the quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Reading, writing and mathematical skills are practised and developed in meaningful contexts by students in lessons across the curriculum.
- Students' behaviour is good and rarely disrupts learning. Where incidents of poor behaviour do occur, they are managed very well to keep students safe and on task.
- The school is well led and managed. The very effective monitoring of students' progress linked to performance management of teachers has ensured the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection.
- The sixth form is good. The varied curriculum prepares students very well for the next stage in their lives with the vast majority of students making successful moves to further education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently take into account prior learning. Consequently, they do not always plan work which is matched to the abilities of individual students to ensure they make the best progress they possibly can in every lesson.
- A very small minority of parents feel they are given insufficient information about what their children are learning. Inspectors agree that this can make it difficult for parents to feel able to support their child's progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. All teachers, tutors and higher-level teaching assistants were observed teaching.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the governing body, the school nurse and a group of students.
- Discussions were also held with a representative from the local authority and with two parents.
- The inspectors took account of the six responses on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and of the telephone conversations with two parents and one written submission. They reviewed the 35 staff questionnaires completed.
- Inspectors scrutinised many documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, governing body minutes, external adviser reports. Records relating to students' progress data and accreditation, safeguarding and behaviour were also examined.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

John Ashley

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Meadowside is a secondary special school for students who have a range of complex needs including moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- Over 40% of students also present with autistic spectrum disorders and this proportion has increased since the previous inspection.
- A third of students are in the post-16 or sixth form department.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. There are a very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form access courses at Wirral Metropolitan College, the Vocational College Liverpool, Wirral Youth Theatre and at Woodchurch High School, supported by Meadowside School staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and increase the rate of students' progress so that both are consistently outstanding by:
 - ensuring on-going assessment is used effectively to build on prior learning
 - identifying learning outcomes and tasks that ensure challenge for each individual student in every lesson.
- Improve communication with parents to better inform them about and involve them in their child's learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students with a wide range of needs and abilities all achieve well. Students say they learn a lot in lessons and enjoy what the school has to offer. This view extends to off-site provision.
- Rates of progress can vary depending on the special educational needs of individual students. For instance, some students with more profound and multiple learning difficulties experience periods of hospitalisation or illness which can interrupt their learning. Those with autistic spectrum disorders may have occasions when they find it difficult to engage in lessons. However, strong and supportive relationships between staff and students help to overcome barriers to learning.
- The school makes very effective use of a wide range of assessment materials to track students' progress and set challenging targets for them over time. Careful analysis of their data by school leaders shows that there are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups or in different subjects and those eligible for the pupil premium are closing the gap.
- Students make good progress with their reading and writing and practise their skills across the curriculum. Higher-ability students are able to use their reading skills to research for information on the internet, for example when making a shopping list of items to stock a garden in a horticulture lesson.
- Similarly, students learn how to put their mathematical skills to practical use for their future lives. In a cookery lesson, students across the age range were encouraged to weigh out ingredients independently. In a sixth form business studies lesson students worked out the amount of interest they would pay on a credit card loan to decide if this was a good way to borrow the money they needed for a mini enterprise.
- Students make best progress in lessons where they are challenged to work independently and where work is well-matched to their individual abilities, but this is not yet consistently achieved in all lessons. They respond well to opportunities to evaluate how well they think they have done in lessons and many have a good understanding of the progress they are making towards their targets.
- Students look forward to progressing to the sixth form. The school has improved the curriculum on offer since the previous inspection to better match individual needs and interests and students are very well prepared for their future lives. As a result, all students leave with a range of external awards and most transfer to colleges where they have enjoyed attending courses during their time in the sixth form.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school, including in the sixth form, is mainly good and some teachers deliver consistently outstanding lessons. In these lessons, work is well-matched to individual needs and teachers employ a range of techniques and change activities frequently to maintain interest and engage students in their learning.
- However, in a few lessons, particularly where teachers are new to the school or are teaching a new subject, students' prior learning is not assessed rigorously enough. This results in intended learning which is not always well enough matched to the next steps they need to make.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are particularly skilful in developing communication through sign and visual routines and by developing their own knowledge about the use of communication aids. They are very well supported by therapists and the school nurse to ensure students' well-being so that they are ready and able to learn.
- During lessons, teachers question students well to ensure their understanding and to provide additional support where necessary. They use visual resources to demonstrate difficult concepts, such as using different sized balls to show the movement of the earth round the sun in a science lesson about seasons.
- Effective use is made of teaching assistants in lessons, although occasionally they might be better deployed so that more individualised work is given to maximise each student's progress.

- In the sixth form, the curriculum ensures students develop the knowledge and skills they will need in their future lives. Teachers devise lessons to help students understand how to manage their money, grow and cook their food, how to keep fit and ensure their personal hygiene, for example.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around school are good. Students want to do well and enjoy working for their merits and credits.
- Students benefit from the very good relationships they have with teaching and support staff. As a result they make outstanding progress in their personal development. They build their confidence and independence and make great strides in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Behaviour management is consistent and highly effective. This was observed during the inspection when an incident occurred during a lesson. Staff dealt with the situation quickly and calmly to ensure other students were not affected. All staff are well trained to support students and help them develop self-management skills.
- The school has introduced a new system for analysing behaviour incidents and the use of the resulting information is beginning to impact on behaviour support planning.
- Students say they feel safe in school. They are very confident that adults will deal with any issues swiftly so that bullying, they say, is not a problem. They learn how to keep themselves safe and can give examples such as using goggles for science experiments, opening cooker doors safely and safe use of the internet.
- Off-site learning is managed safely through high quality risk assessments and monitoring by staff who support students on placements. Consequently, students respond positively and their behaviour is reported as good.
- Students are very respectful and supportive of each other. They work cooperatively and share; as one student said, 'We're all a team here'.

The leadership and management are good

- All staff and governors at Meadowside share a desire to continuously improve standards for the students. At the moment, for example, they are seeking ways to improve the learning environment for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Although these students achieve as well as others, it is the case that the facilities and resources for them are not currently at the same standard as the rest of the school.
- Additional funds available through the pupil premium or the 16-19 bursary scheme are used thoughtfully to improve equality of access to experiences such as extended day activities, residential or additional specialist support.
- Senior leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. A recent re-structure has strengthened the management team and provided opportunities for middle managers to develop new leadership skills.
- Improvement planning takes account of national guidance and changes to ensure that the school maintains its good qualities. Very effective performance management of teachers and teaching assistants is well linked to school improvement plans and continuing professional development.
- The curriculum has improved significantly since the previous inspection, especially for older students. It offers different pathways which engage and motivate students' differing needs and interests and ensures they all leave school with qualifications which reflect these. The very good partnerships the school enjoys with alternative providers enhances the curriculum on offer still further.
- Partnerships with a range of other professionals and agencies ensure the very varied medical and therapeutic needs of students are well met so that they can obtain maximum benefit from

their time in school.

- The local authority has an accurate view of the school and rightly provides only very light touch support.
 - Links with parents are generally very positive. Parents feel able to approach the school with concerns about their children and are appreciative of the support they receive. A very small minority of parents expressed the view that they would like more consistent information about what their children are learning in school and the inspectors agreed with this.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body effectively support and robustly challenge the school.
 - Members of the governing body ensure good arrangements for safeguarding students.
 - Governors have a reasonably good knowledge of the day-to-day running of the school, although this is restricted somewhat to those members of governing body who are able to visit more frequently.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 105133 |
| Local authority | Wirral |
| Inspection number | 400758 |

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

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| 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 | 74 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 26 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Geoffrey Gubb |
| Headteacher | Paula Wareing |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 March 2010 |
| Telephone number | 0151 678 7711 |
| Fax number | 0151 678 9155 |
| Email address | headteacher@meadowside.wirral.sch.uk |

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