

# Meadowcroft School

Independent special school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell
Social care inspector	Muhammed Harun Rashid

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection focused only on how effective the home was in keeping the children safe and took place at the same time, but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report, which covers the educational registration of the school.

## Information about the school

Meadowcroft School, formerly known as Haven House at Meadowcroft, is a special school for pupils from 11 to 16 years of age and is located within the children's home where the pupils live. The school provides for children who are in local authority care at the home. It opened in 2006 at another site and was last inspected there in March 2008. It provides education for pupils who have special educational needs relating to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and other learning needs. On occasions, pupils have a statement of special educational needs although at the time of this inspection, there were none on roll. All pupils have experienced a fragmented educational history. Pupils enter the school at different times and sometimes at very short notice due to emergency social care placements. The length of stay depends upon their care requirements. The last social care inspection took place in August 2010. The school's aims include the provision of individual education programmes for young people in their care and to offer a happy, safe and stimulating environment where the pupils can learn about themselves and make a positive contribution.

## Evaluation of the school

Meadowcroft School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. The school meets its aims through the provision of individual programmes and enables the pupils to make satisfactory progress. The curriculum and the quality of teaching and assessment are satisfactory. The school's safeguarding arrangements are good. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and meets all regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

## Quality of education

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. All subjects of the National Curriculum are offered as required by pupils' statements of special educational needs when applicable. The curriculum is supported by subject policies and schemes of work drawn from national guidance for Key Stages 3 and 4. There is also a strong emphasis on personal development through personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). The school's introduction of the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) initiative is at an early stage. Where appropriate, schemes of work relate to the requirements of examination boards, including GCSE, AQA Unit Awards and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The school has established links with a local mainstream school to enable pupils to sit GCSE examinations. Work-experience placements and access to further education colleges are also provided when appropriate. Links with the Connexions service and other agencies are established to provide relevant guidance for the next stage on leaving school. Appropriate consideration is given to the relevant key stage, and personalised education plans take into account the wide range of factors affecting the pupils' learning and behaviour in the school and home settings.

The care staff provide a range of after-school activities and are in the early stages of monitoring the pupils' response to the programme. Currently, opportunities are missed to maximise the impact of these activities on school work such as ASDAN units. The school's policy states that homework of several hours per week is provided to support pupils' subject studies. Staff acknowledge that such levels are difficult to achieve.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The teacher has good subject knowledge in English and media studies and sufficient for the other subjects offered. The planning for lessons has improved although some learning objectives are too broad to assess accurately. The teacher is aware of pupils' preferred learning styles and interests. This knowledge is used to good effect, for example, when pupils use a search engine on the internet to collate images that reflect their identity, which are then used in a slide show presentation program. Care staff provide learning support in all lessons and this is most successful when they take an active part in learning. The need for additional training to make their input more effective has been identified by the school. This process has been completed for one member of staff although they are not always deployed to work in the classroom. There are no formal opportunities for staff to jointly discuss lesson planning and assessment. All staff place a high priority on positive relationships with pupils whose response to education can range from fully engaged to a refusal to attend.

The pupils make satisfactory progress overall during the time they are at the school. Their progress is aided by the teaching they receive and is adversely affected by inconsistent attitudes to study and erratic attendance. Predicted grades are revised regularly in the light of the pupils' response to school. Achievements include a range

of AQA unit awards in English, mathematics, science, media studies, art, physical education and citizenship. Awards at bronze and silver level are also gained through the ASDAN programmes.

The assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory. Effective use is made of guidance provided by the relevant examination boards and links have been established with a local secondary school for GCSE entries. The teaching staff are at an early stage of embracing recent initiatives in assessment and planning. There are good examples of constructive marking that shows pupils how to improve their work.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The pupils' response to what the school provides shows an appreciation of what the school and home provide during and after the school day. Records of attendance and punctuality for lessons indicate that pupils still experience significant difficulties in engaging with learning in a consistent manner which inevitably impairs the progress they make.

The pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The school's monitoring of behaviour shows variations that range from good, where pupils are amicable and engage fully in learning, to occasions where pupils are non-compliant and confrontational. They know and understand the school's rewards and sanctions policies. Reflection upon behaviour and progress is encouraged and achievements are celebrated weekly during assemblies at the end of the week. Pupils are also encouraged to set their own behaviour targets so that they have a clearer understanding of expectations held for them.

The curriculum, including the personal, social, health and citizenship programme, provides adequate opportunities for the pupils to consider the wider elements of British society and institutions. These include such topics as the media and its influence upon society, with particular reference to the impact of social networking websites and press ownership. The specific role played by women was identified as a topical subject to coincide with International Women's Day. Pertinent work on crime also enabled one pupil to design an album cover addressing the dangers of gun crime. The pupils become involved in fund raising for charity and they have a range of responsibilities within the home which enable them to make a positive contribution to their own community. There are no responsibilities offered during the school day.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. There are appropriate policies and procedures to ensure the safety of pupils on and off site. Registers of attendance and records of incidents and accidents are appropriately kept. The pupils enjoy healthy meals and access to regular exercise. The school and care staff have good relationships with external agencies, including the Connexions

service, although the pupils sometimes do not attend appointments. The care staff encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles by not smoking, by increasing the pupils' awareness of cessation programmes, thus far with limited success.

All pupils have individual care plans with a strong focus on their personal development and behavioural needs. A pupil questionnaire returned indicated that the staff are easily approached with concerns. Safeguarding procedures are good and comply fully with requirements. There are appropriate policies for child protection and safe recruitment of staff. All staff are regularly trained at appropriate levels in matters relating to child protection. Fire safety equipment is routinely tested and fire drills are carried out on a regular basis. The school fulfils its responsibilities in respect of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school has clear, rigorous and well-established procedures for checking the suitability of all staff. All the required checks have been appropriately completed and are recorded in a single central register as required.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school's premises and accommodation are adequate for effective learning. They are well maintained and in good decorative order. A rolling programme of maintenance ensures that the fabric of the building is in a sound condition. There are two classrooms that are suitable in size for the number of pupils currently on roll. Wall displays are informative and also include examples of pupils' work that celebrate achievement, however, some material is placed too high for ease of use. The ground floor of the residential accommodation provides adequate facilities for dining, food technology and administration. If pupils are ill during the school day they are able to go upstairs to their bedrooms. The outdoor area provides ample opportunities for safe play and good use is made of local sports facilities to support the curriculum.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides all parents, carers and referring authorities with the required information. The school is aware of the need to harmonise information contained in the school prospectus and the home's statement of purpose. Written progress reports about school work and behaviour are of good quality. All other required information provided to parents, carers and outside bodies is appropriate. The views of placing authorities indicate that they are satisfied with the information received.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school has appropriate policies and procedures that fully meet requirements.

The care provision in respect of keeping the children safe was judged to be good and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Adopt current guidance on good practice in assessment to help to ensure that learning objectives in lessons are sufficiently precise.
- Improve the effectiveness of care staff who support education by securing regular opportunities to jointly plan lessons and by providing further training in learning support.
- Improve attendance and punctuality to lessons.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			✓	
The behaviour of pupils			✓	

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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## SCHOOL DETAILS

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	2006		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 0
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£215,160		
<b>Address of school</b>	c/o Castle Care Group, The Manor House, Squires Hill, Rothwell, Northants NN14 6BQ		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01536 711111		
<b>Email address</b>	rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Marion Paige		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Castle Care group		