

# The Meadows

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter McKenzie

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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>

## **Information about the school**

The Meadows opened in 2006 as a small independent special school. The school admits students aged 11 to 16 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Four students, who are in the care of several different local authorities, attend the school. One student has a statement of special educational needs. All have been permanently excluded, or withdrawn, from their previous school or educational provision. The school aims to develop students' self-confidence and their attitude to learning by providing a safe and encouraging setting with a wide range of academic and outdoor activities. The ultimate aim is to enable students to leave with sufficient skills and confidence to do well in society, further study and work. The school was last inspected in 2008.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The Meadows provides its students with an outstanding quality of education and fully meets its aims. Outstanding curriculum provision and teaching based on the needs of the individual students ensure rapid progress and outstanding achievement from low attainment on entry. Students' outstanding behaviour and commitment to learning are an important factor in their success. Outstanding provision for students' health welfare and safety, including safeguarding arrangements, creates a secure and caring learning environment in which students flourish educationally. Students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development plays a significant part in their preparation to live independently and take their place in society. The school meets all the regulations.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is outstanding. It is based on an overall curriculum policy, supported by individual subject policies and detailed schemes of work in all areas of learning required by the regulations. There is an excellent programme of study for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and students learn about national public institutions and services in the citizenship programme. PSHE includes careers education, outdoor education and citizenship, all of which prepare students for independence in the next stage of their lives. Extra-curricular art and music therapy

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

and the newly introduced equine therapy, support their personal and emotional development. Planning in the academic curriculum recognises that students arrive with low attainment because of gaps in their previous educational experience, and therefore challenges them to reach their potential. The school uses GCSE as its main accreditation and this provides well for the needs of the students, who are able to respond to the high levels of challenge. The school is registered as a training and assessment centre for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Most qualifying students achieve elements of the bronze award, restricted only by the short amount of time they may be in school.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Working with very small groups of students, teachers provide effective individual support which secures high levels of achievement for all. Students said, 'Teachers [in this school] have a better understanding of the difficulties people have.' Through excellent assessment and tracking procedures and recording, they and the students know current attainment standards and expectations. This is very important because students often arrive at and leave the school outside the standard starting and finishing points of examination courses. The teaching encourages students to apply intellectual effort to their studies and challenges them well to reach the highest possible standards. In a minority of lessons, students' independence in their learning is not sufficiently encouraged because the teacher controls each step in the learning too closely. Teachers' subject knowledge and their additional qualifications in therapies such as outdoor education, art therapy and equine therapy make a strong contribution to students' progress.

Students make outstanding progress. All recent and current students have arrived in school with low prior attainment, often because of interrupted educational experience. They make rapid progress and, by the end of Year 10, most achieve at least the national expectation in basic skills for 16-year-olds. Current students have already succeeded at above average levels in full GCSE courses, or at least modules, in English, mathematics and science. A parent said, 'My child switched off from education for at least 18 months... it's great to see the excellent results the school has [turned around] in a short time.' Students develop their literacy skills in all lessons, for example they understand roots of words and their use in understanding and forming other words. Students recognise the importance of success and have very high aspirations, 'You do learn well; this school will deliver.' The school has a highly successful record of its students going on to college and university and of success in other areas. Although they often come to the school from distant places, several have developed independent lifestyles in the area.

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school implements its policy through a programme of teaching, visits and activities which develop self-awareness. Students have a positive attitude to learning which results in exceptional achievement. Their behaviour is outstanding. They attend regularly and punctually. Their concentration and commitment in lessons makes a major

contribution to their outstanding achievement. They are thoughtful and considerate and help to create a positive learning and social environment. They help each other and support adults. They participate in a full range of extra-curricular activities, enhance their self-knowledge, and are challenged by new experiences such as horse riding and outdoor pursuits. Students have visited a local mosque and a synagogue. They have been to the local courts and observed a trial. They respect others' views and are growing in their understanding of the world outside school. Students are particularly successful in the GCSE half-course in citizenship. They support local charity by fund-raising and one student works in a charity shop. The school's behaviour policy and practice are effective in stimulating an understanding of moral issues. Students' social awareness is fostered in the team aspect of outdoor education and by living and learning in a close community. Students prepare for their future economic well-being by acquiring good standards in basic skills, through work experience and careers guidance.

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

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is outstanding. A full range of policies which comply with legislation is carefully implemented and regularly reviewed. Students have often experienced behavioural difficulties before coming to the Meadows but the impact of the school's caring environment, as well as its behaviour and anti-bullying policies, instils in them a sense of community. This is reinforced by extra-curricular activities and therapy. Fire safety is excellent. Fire risk assessment, a detailed fire log, regular testing of alarms and appliances and regular evacuations are all recorded. The recent inspection by a fire prevention officer found the premises fully compliant. All staff are trained in first aid and students follow a first aid course as part of the physical education curriculum. This is of particular value in the outdoor education programme. Students increase their trust in adults and other students as a result of activities and because of the excellent provision for their safety. Robust risk assessments are appropriately in place for activities both on site and for educational visits. A clear child protection policy is in place and all staff have been trained at the appropriate level to fulfil their child protection duties. The school holds the Healthy Schools award and the silver Eco Schools award. Food served in the school is in keeping with the Healthy Schools status: many healthy options such as fruit, salad and fish, all of which are popular with students. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

The school's safer recruitment and staff vetting procedures are robust. These policies and arrangements ensure that all staff and others are suitable to work with students. The single central register meets regulatory requirements.

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

The school is located in recently extended and refurbished premises in extensive grounds close to open countryside. Classrooms are of a suitable size and provided with equipment which caters for a range of educational activity. Facilities for leisure activity are available on site, including a well-stocked fishing lake. This learning and leisure environment is highly respected by students.

## **Provision of information**

All of the required information is provided, or is made available, to parents, carers and others either in the school brochure or on the website. The school fully meets requirements in respect of annual accounting procedures to placing authorities. The provision of reports for reviews of statements of special educational needs is fully in place.

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

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

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

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

- Provide more opportunities for independent learning.

## 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. Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2006		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 4	Total: 4
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 4	Total: 4
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£60,667		
<b>Email address</b>	rachel.dowle@countrycare.org.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Dowle		
<b>Proprietor</b>	David & Pamela Cathcart		



**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.**



8 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Meadows**

Thank you for your welcome when I visited your school recently. I particularly wanted to thank you for talking to me about your experiences at school and for completing questionnaires.

I found your school to be outstanding in every respect. I think you are very fortunate to have such an excellent opportunity to learn and make progress in such a supportive environment.

So far, you have all made outstanding progress. You know that you first arrived in school with lower standards than many other students of your age because you had missed much time at school. Your most recent results are a clear indication of your hard work and the high quality of teaching, care and support you have received from teachers and others at The Meadows.

I have asked your teachers to give you a little more freedom to learn independently, perhaps by encouraging you to work together as a group.

You are also making great progress in your personal lives. I was so pleased to hear you talk about your ambitions for the future. I wish you every success in making those dreams come true.

Yours sincerely

Peter McKenzie  
Lead inspector