

Meade Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105614
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	355805
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janis Triska
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Schofield
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. A meeting was held with the principal of the Manchester Emotional Behavioural and Social Difficulty Federation who is also the representative of the Interim Executive Board. Meetings were also held with the headteachers and senior staff on both sites. Informal discussions were held with several pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including that relating to the safeguarding of pupils and school improvement. Eight questionnaires were returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether learning and progress are sufficiently good to help pupils to overcome a legacy of prior underachievement.
- Whether pupils achieve broadly equally across the two sites.
- Whether enough is being done to improve attendance and behaviour.
- Whether leaders and managers demonstrate a track record of making improvements and paving the way for future ones.

Information about the school

The school operates on two sites, Meade Hill for Key Stage 3 pupils and Castlefield for those in Key Stage 4. There are similar numbers of pupils on both sites. Each site is led by a different headteacher under the overall management of the principal of the hard federation* of three schools to which they belong. The appropriate authority for the school is the interim executive board (IEB)**, which replaced the governing body when the federation was formed. A 'shadow' governing body has recently been formed with a view to taking over governance of the school later this year. A restructuring of staffing is taking place.

All pupils have a statement of special educational needs reflecting their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils also have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities, often relating to attention or communication difficulties. Most pupils are White British. Over three quarters are known to be eligible for free school meals. Boys significantly outnumber girls.

Travel time between the two sites is up to an hour. The Meade Hill site was closed on the second day of the inspection for a previously arranged staff training day.

* A hard federation exists when two or more schools share one governing body. Within this arrangement each school maintains its own budget and much of its own identity.

** An interim executive board is appointed by the local authority. It acts as the governing body for a school or federation in the period between the dissolution of a previous governing body and the formation of another.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Over the past year, it has improved rapidly. Good leadership and management of teaching and learning have driven much of this improvement. This has resulted in pupils making increasingly rapid progress and enjoying school. This enjoyment is demonstrated by rapidly improving attendance and behaviour. Teaching is good overall and is sometimes outstanding.

There are many good pointers to the school developing its capacity for improvement. Issues identified by the previous inspection and a subsequent monitoring visit have been systematically tackled. Leadership and management are stabilising following a short period of turbulence on the Meade Hill site. There is an increasingly strong focus on raising attainment and there is effective and accurate self-evaluation. The reason why the school is judged to have a satisfactory, rather than good, capacity for improvement is because many staff, including leaders and managers, are not currently in permanent posts, pending a restructuring.

Although attendance is rising quickly, in response to initiatives already introduced, it remains low and presents the main barrier to pupils achieving more. Exclusions have fallen rapidly over the past year and recourse to this ultimate sanction is now rare.

The curriculum is developing well. It has achieved a good balance between promoting learning and the personal development of pupils, following a period when there was an over-focus on the latter. All activities can now be seen to be educationally valid. Not enough is currently being done to promote curricular continuity and progression across the two sites through the sharing of subject expertise.

Pupils are well cared for, guided and supported. They say they feel safe and most of them enjoy school. The views of parents and carers support this.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance by:
 - developing the role of a staff member to work with those pupils who are most at risk of becoming disengaged from school
 - developing a system whereby pupils in Years 9 and 10 can be entered early for exams to motivate them to keep attending regularly through the later stages of Key Stage 4 in order to build upon prior success

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- developing a system whereby pupils can be more actively involved in encouraging the attendance of their peers and be rewarded for doing so.
- Develop stronger curricular links between the two sites by sharing specialist expertise more extensively, in order to ensure continuity and progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment on entry is nearly always low. This is usually because of the social, emotional and behavioural difficulties pupils experience rather than any significant degree of learning difficulty. Because these needs are tackled effectively, pupils are freed up to concentrate upon learning and, as a result, in conjunction with good teaching, pupils make rapid progress. This progress contributes well to their satisfactory achievement and to rising attainment, although this remains low.

In lessons, pupils behave well and work hard. They listen carefully to instructions and are keen to participate in discussions about what they are learning. Pupils with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers in lessons because they are offered good support and guidance and are given work that is carefully varied to meet their needs and match their abilities. As a result, there is very little difference in the relative progress of any discrete group of pupils, including the minority group of girls.

In addition to their good behaviour in lessons, conduct around the school is also good. Break and lunchtimes are very settled and pupils get on well with each other. Misbehaviour in the form of bullying or discrimination is very rare and always dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. This contributes to the school operating as a harmonious community in which individual opinions are listened to. A school council has recently been formed to give pupils an extended forum through which they can contribute more to school improvement.

Low attendance is the biggest barrier to better achievement. The issue is particularly acute in Key Stage 4 where a legacy of previous high absence impacts most noticeably. This dates from a time when the school was unsettled and many pupils became disaffected. Having developed a pattern of irregular or non-attendance the school now has difficulty in getting these pupils to re-engage, especially those who are due to leave in the near future. Nevertheless, actions taken by the school to improve attendance have had a big impact, especially in Key Stage 3, and attendance is rising rapidly and sustainably, helped by improvements in teaching and the curriculum which are making learning more enjoyable and purposeful.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching has become a hallmark of the school. Outstanding teaching is increasingly frequently being seen. This is often conducted by senior staff, who are setting a particularly good example to those less experienced. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that new learning builds systematically on prior learning. Work is carefully matched to individual needs. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Outstanding teaching is frequently characterised by the meticulous way in which the best teachers break down tasks into very small challenges which rapidly build up pupils' confidence and reduce anxiety. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where pupils rapidly developed an understanding of how the areas and perimeters of complex shapes can be measured by breaking them down into simpler shapes. There is good involvement of pupils in their learning. This moves towards outstanding in those lessons where pupils are most involved in assessing their own work and commenting on the work of other pupils. The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory and improving. In the recent past, this has been hindered by a lack of reliable data, but systems have been overhauled. Teachers now have more reliable data and are using it to greater effect.

The curriculum has a suitable focus on promoting the basic skills of numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT). A good balance is kept between promoting learning and meeting individual needs so that pupils can gain the maximum

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benefit from what is being taught. What weakens the curriculum is that there is not enough sharing of subject expertise between the two sites and also within the federation of schools. This limits the frequency of lessons being taught by subject specialist teachers and the support that can be given to non-specialists. At present, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to follow accredited courses earlier than at the usual time. This means that an opportunity is missed to use the incentive of gaining qualifications early as a means of encouraging pupils to improve grades or seek higher level qualifications in their final year in school and thus further encourage them to attend.

There are good, well-organised arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils. Individuals with additional needs and/or the greatest degree of vulnerability are given good support, often by skilled classroom assistants. There are many good examples of how individuals have been helped to improve their attendance and behaviour radically. In one notable instance, a previously persistent absentee is now attending 95% of the time. All Key Stage 4 pupils have weekly access to specialist careers' guidance, which includes advice on post-16 options, including college and training opportunities. The school works closely and effectively with many support agencies and professionals involved in helping pupils and their families. It recognises the importance of developing further strategies, such as peer encouragement and entering Year 9 and 10 pupils early for examinations, in order to maintain improvements in attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The quality of teaching and learning has been significantly improved through good leadership and management initiatives introduced by the headteachers of the two sites. As a result, pupils' achievement is improving and attainment is rising. There has been a strong focus on promoting the educational validity of all aspects of the curriculum and extending teachers' behaviour management systems to defuse the challenging nature of many pupils calmly. A whole-school initiative to standardise lesson-planning has helped comparisons to be made and allows best practice to be shared. The introduction of a standardised marking policy is beginning to impact on teachers' assessment of pupils' work and the advice given to them as to how they can make further improvements. Responses to a staff questionnaire and discussions with many staff during the inspection confirm that staff are happy and share an increasing sense of ambition.

Through their work, the IEB has brought the school to a position where it is deemed that a new governing body can take over. This new governing body has now been formed and is running in parallel with the Interim Executive Board pending a full handover later this

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year. The IEB has been active in leading change and improvement. Members are well-informed, bringing expertise in education, care and involvement in the wider community. They are directly involved in monitoring the performance of senior leaders within the school and offer support and challenge in equal measure.

Equal opportunities are promoted well. Every instance of abuse or harassment is promptly followed up and resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. Tolerance and understanding are strongly promoted, thus contributing well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are no major differences in the achievements of different groups of pupils. Safeguarding procedures are carefully observed and are satisfactory. The overwhelming majority of staff have received training in child protection and safeguarding. The school operates as two discrete communities. Each is cohesive in its own way, but little is done to create a single school identity. Pupils contribute to the broader community through voluntary work, such as in local parks. There are effective plans to involve pupils further in community projects, for instance, in the development of an adventure playground and the projected opening of a bistro one day a week by a food technology group.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a very small response to a questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection. Nearly all responses were totally supportive of the school's work. A small minority view was that their children did not enjoy school. Inspectors endorse the view expressed by a parent/carer that whilst their child did not like school, as it improves, it is becoming more appealing to him.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Meade Hill 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 8 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 47 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	13	5	63	2	25	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	13	7	88	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	38	4	50	1	13	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)	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	50	4	50	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



24 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meade Hill School, Higher Blakeley, M9 6GN

Thank you for making our inspection visit so enjoyable. We were impressed by your good behaviour and how hard you were working in lessons. We left feeling that Meade Hill is a satisfactory school. That means that although it has strengths it also has some weaknesses.

The most important strength is that you are learning well and making rapid progress. This is helping you to catch up with your work and closing the gap between what you have attained in the past and what you could reasonably be expected to attain in the future. This is made possible because you are being taught particularly well, sometimes outstandingly so. You all have timetables that are suited to your interests and needs and it is clear that many of you are enjoying school more than you have at times in the past. I can tell that because attendance is improving rapidly, especially on the Meade Hill site.

There are two important ways in which your school could be even better. The first of these is for those of you on the Castlefield site to match the improvement made in attendance at the Meade Hill site. I am sure that each of you who attends regularly knows some students who don't; could I suggest that you spread the word that school is getting better and encourage them to give it another try? The second point that we feel could improve the school would be for teachers to take responsibility for subjects across both sites to help ensure a smooth transfer from Year 9 to Year 10.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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