

The Meadows School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124512
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359683
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	David Muir HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
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	88
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Lilley
Headteacher	Christian Williams
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2008
School address	Springfield Road Leek ST13 6EU
Telephone number	01538 483036
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Email address	office@themeadows.staffs.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work including approximately five and a half hours of teaching. In addition, they held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, the school council and staff. They scrutinised a range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation, tracking of students' progress and development planning. They also evaluated questionnaire responses from 37 parents and carers and 30 students.

Information about the school

The Meadows School relocated to its current site, co-located with Leek High School, in March 2009. In September 2009, as part of the Staffordshire special school re-organisation process, the school became a generic secondary special school for the Staffordshire Moorlands, where previously it had been an all-age special school for students with moderate learning difficulties. The school now caters for students with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD); autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and severe learning difficulties (SLD). All students have a statement of special educational needs before entering the school. The school was the subject of an Ofsted monitoring visit in April 2010.

Students come from both urban and rural areas across the county. Most students are brought to school by local authority transport. A few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and none have English as an additional language. The school holds several awards, including: National Healthy Schools status; the Staffordshire County Council Anti-Bullying Award; Staffordshire County Council Full Dyslexia Friendly Status and the Staffordshire Careers Education Information 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	2
Achievement	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is a good school which has made many improvements since the previous inspection. The relocation of the school has been a key factor in improving the curriculum as it has provided students with opportunities to access the specialist facilities of the high school. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that the school supports their children effectively in every aspect of its work.
- During their time in the school, students exhibit good behaviour and attitudes to learning. This is a strong characteristic of the school's ethos. Students' personal development ensures that they are increasingly able to manage their own behaviour and are made ready to move on to the next stage of their lives.
- Students make good progress because teachers, and other staff, know them well and have high expectations of what can be achieved. In the best lessons, students are fully engaged in exciting activities which stimulate and fully involve them. As a result, students work enthusiastically and are expected to achieve as well as they can.
- In all subjects and key stages, students make at least good progress. There is some sharing of good practice between staff, including teachers. However, a formal system of fully utilising the best practice there is in the school, in order to make more of the teaching outstanding, is not yet in place.
- The school's leaders provide direction and leadership which inspire and drive staff. They have contributed well to improved outcomes since the previous inspection. Systems have been established which allow students' progress to be tracked accurately. However, it is early days and leaders are not currently able to analyse the data in enough detail to give them a full and comprehensive

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evaluation of the school's performance over time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase progress for all students in the school by:
 - ensuring that the systems for monitoring and tracking progress are effective and comprehensive by collecting data over time and using it to identify trends or patterns in progress
 - raising the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by identifying and sharing the best practice available in the school.

Main report

Since the previous inspection and the school's relocation to its current site, an impressive partnership has developed between the two schools. It has promoted access to a range of high quality inclusion opportunities, alongside the school's good curriculum, for the students in the Meadows School. This has been achieved through the use of the high school's specialist facilities which have allowed enhanced curriculum opportunities that would have otherwise been unavailable. An example of this is the use of the facilities to access the Hospitality Diploma alongside the high school students. The school has adapted so that staff are able to meet the changing needs of students well, through well-targeted continuing professional development. As a result of this, all groups of students make good progress, irrespective of their particular special educational needs and/or disabilities. Systems for collecting data and monitoring students' progress have been improved since the previous inspection. However, the new systems are in their early days and the school is not currently able to monitor patterns of progress over time. The data, so far collected, shows that on current evidence, students make good progress in all three key stages and in all subjects. This was supported by the evidence of learning and progress seen in lessons during the inspection.

The school is a friendly and welcoming community and there are strong relationships between students and staff. Nearly all of the students continue their education into Key Stage 5, where they are able to access an increasing array of courses and accredited qualifications suitable to their needs. These opportunities include placements in the local mainstream college and links with other providers and trainers. Due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities, the attainment of students on entry to the school and when they leave is low. In lessons observed during the inspection, learning was judged to be generally good and some seen was outstanding, particularly in literacy. Students' attitudes to learning are positive due to adults' high expectations of behaviour and teaching which motivates, engages and promotes in them a joy of learning.

In the best lessons, work matches the ability levels and interests of the students

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extremely well and questioning is well thought-out so that it maximises the progress which students make, enabling teachers to adapt activities appropriately according to the learning taking place during the lesson. The school's monitoring of progress shows that there is no significant difference in the progress of groups of students. The school ensures that the development of literacy and numeracy skills is a focus in all lessons and this results in students making at least good progress in these areas. This aspect has been further enhanced by the recent change in emphasis of roles for the co-ordinator of each of these areas, to ensure that the changing needs of students are being met. In the few less effective lessons seen during the inspection, students were not given sufficient time to undertake activities effectively and they did not have time to consider their response to questions asked of them. This had the effect of limiting the progress that they were able to make in these lessons.

Behaviour seen, during the inspection, was good and the attitudes of students contribute well to the quality of learning and personal development. Behaviour also contributes well to the positive ethos and atmosphere around all areas of the school. Students are proud of their school and greatly enjoy their time there. They show an understanding of the needs of their friends and classmates and are happy to share in others' successes, as seen during frequent rounds of applause to support each other in some lessons. The behaviour seen reflects the school's records as well as the responses of parents and carers and students to the Ofsted questionnaires. The questionnaires overwhelmingly support the judgment that behaviour is good and parents and carers consider that their children are well looked after and safe. Some concerns were raised by students about bullying, but it was very clear that they all felt comfortable with seeking help from an adult, should any problems arise. First hand evidence during the inspection and the school's records support the view that bullying is not a problem in the school. The ethos of the school places a strong focus on promoting students' independence and ensuring that they are well supported, through the curriculum and other procedures. Good attendance shows that students enjoy coming to school. This continues into Key Stage 5 where the improved match of courses to students' needs results in them gaining a wider range of qualifications than at the last inspection.

Leaders have made significant progress in devising systems to monitor the performance of the school and students, as was reflected in the monitoring visit in April 2010. Teachers are now able to directly record data more regularly so that it is fully up to date. This has contributed to all aspects of the school's work being more fully evaluated to support school improvement. Middle leaders and class teachers have taken on increasing levels of responsibility through shared leadership. This has resulted in areas of high quality practice, such as literacy, being developed impressively. All staff feel very well supported in being able to develop and enhance their skills to meet the changing needs of students in the school. The support provided to new staff to enable them to quickly take on areas of responsibility reflects the school's aim to be as inclusive as it can, and for all members of the school community to contribute to its improvement. The school is starting to use the expertise it has among its staff to promote improved practice, in order to consolidate and build on the better teaching in the school. Nevertheless a striking example,

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which is already evident, is the sharing of high quality practice in the teaching of literacy and phonics throughout the school. The resulting skills that students demonstrate in tackling and sounding out words that they do not recognise shows outstanding progress in this area. Parents and carers unanimously support many aspects of the school's work, including how it helps them to support their children's learning and how well it takes any concerns they may have into account. Some typical comments from parents and carers which show the level of support that the school enjoys include: 'At the Meadows School I feel that she is 100% safe and cared for to excellent standards.'; '(His) teacher recognises the level he needs to work at and the individually tailored and practical curriculum has benefitted him not only academically but also socially' and 'I cant believe how well my son has done since starting The Meadows School in Year 8. He has achieved so much.'

The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and development well, although there are limited opportunities for students to interact with people from other cultures and backgrounds. Social development is promoted through students' involvement in activities such as the school council where their views are actively sought. They contribute effectively to the school, including through their full involvement in the annual Year 11 prom in partnership with the high school. Many opportunities are provided throughout the school day for students to reflect on all aspects of their lives during lessons and in assemblies.

The recently restructured governing body plays an increasingly active part in the life of the school and in monitoring its performance. Governors are now aware of the new data-monitoring systems and are pro-active in ensuring that they are fully aware of the progress that students are making, through reports from a range of staff. Members of the governing body are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school and hold leaders to account for its performance. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. The work of leaders and the governing body since the previous inspection demonstrates that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Meadows 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 88 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	31	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	27	73	10	27	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	30	81	7	19	0	0	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	28	76	9	24	0	0	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	31	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	31	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	24	65	13	35	0	0	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	21	57	15	41	1	3	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	25	68	12	32	0	0	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	30	81	7	19	0	0	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	31	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	31	84	6	16	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Meadows School, Leek, ST13 6EU

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for making our two days with you very interesting and enjoyable.

We found that The Meadows is a good school. The headteacher, leadership team and staff all work very hard to make your time in school successful. Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. This includes the way you learn to manage your own behaviour, enjoy lessons and learn the difference between right and wrong. We judged that behaviour and safety are good, as you are well looked-after and you also treat each other with respect and kindness. In meetings, and in the questionnaire, you told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe there. You also make good progress in the work that you do in lessons and in some lessons that we saw, you made outstanding progress. The teaching and the support you receive in the school are also good. Adults know when to support you and when to allow you to work on your own. You should all be proud of your contribution to the school.

I have asked the school to improve the following so it can get even better:

- to help you to make even more progress by:
 - making sure that the school leaders continue to improve the use of data so that they know how much progress you are making over time
 - providing more opportunities for the teachers to share and learn from the best practice that there is already in the school so that teaching moves from good to outstanding.

You can all help with this, by using the school council to tell the teachers what you like best and what would make you more interested in learning than you are already.

Once again, thank you very much for the time you spent with us during the visit and we would like to wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector

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