

# Lime Meadows

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin

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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

Lime Meadows is a small special school owned by Whistledawn Ltd and run by Northern Care. It is located in a renovated house in Ashton-under-Lyne in Greater Manchester. The school provides education for up to six students between the ages of 14 and 18 years with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. The students live in residential accommodation provided by the company. The school was opened in September 2001. Currently there are six students between the ages of 16 and 18 years attending the school; all of them are looked after children and five have statements of special educational needs. Students are placed at Lime Meadows by a number of different local authorities. Some have had periods in the past when they have not attended school or have been excluded from education. The school aims to 'promote the fundamental values of society and guide children to a productive life when their formal education ends'. The school's last full inspection was in 2009.

## Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of the education provided is outstanding, including the curriculum, teaching and assessment and students' progress, and all of the regulations are met. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are robust. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students, including their behaviour, is outstanding as is the school's provision for their welfare, health and safety. The school has addressed all of the regulatory failures identified in the last inspection, has made good progress and clearly meets its aims.

## Quality of education

The school provides an outstanding 24-hour curriculum that is devised and monitored in close conjunction with care staff at the residential provision. Students arrive at school with a wide range of prior attainment and the curriculum is individualised with great care to meet the exact needs of each young person. The school places great emphasis on literacy and numeracy through discreet individual and group lessons and through the highly effective integration of English and number studies throughout all of the other subjects. An example of this was the strong focus on poetry and lyrics observed in a music technology lesson. The

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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).

curriculum is implemented through very thorough schemes of work individualised according to the abilities of the students.

The school aims to integrate students into mainstream education and to equip them with the academic and social skills necessary for when they leave school. For these reasons, individualised learning programmes focus on life skills such as economic well-being, work experience and cooking. Students work towards Functional Skills and Entry Level certificates and most are encouraged to achieve GCSE certification. They are encouraged to attend college when they are ready and are supported through this process exceptionally well.

Students are given very valuable experiences in all of the required areas of learning. These include cross-curricular science, gardening, information and communication technology (ICT), and art and design. The school's programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is particularly strong and is taught through a commercially-produced syllabus, supported by related work in all of the other areas of the curriculum. For example, cookery lessons include a focus on social interactions while shopping and place a strong emphasis on food hygiene and healthy eating. Excellent physical education is provided, including kayaking, horse-riding and wall-climbing courses. Students discuss their future and receive valuable careers advice through the school's pastoral programmes.

Students take part in a good variety of extra-curricular activities organised by their care workers in conjunction with school staff. Many activities promote physical education such as football, badminton, tennis, basketball and cricket that take place either in the local sports hall or playing fields. Students enjoy arts and crafts, garden activities, swing-ball and basketball at their residence, and bowling, golf, fishing and cycling off site. They also go on day trips to the beach, Lake District, Llandudno and Blackpool. All of these activities have a very significant impact on the attitudes of the students towards learning; they contribute to functional and social skills and help prepare students for life after they leave school.

Teaching and assessment in the school are outstanding. Teachers are highly committed to ensuring that students appreciate and value education and that they regard it as the cornerstone of their futures. They have succeeded in creating an outstanding learning environment where students are motivated to excel in their studies. Time is managed extremely well and schemes of work ensure that individual learning programmes are covered fully. Teachers plan their lessons very well with full regard to the differing abilities of the students. They use a very good range of resources including many that were specifically created to support individual lessons. They make good use of the ICT equipment available to them, although internet access is very limited so as to safeguard the students. Teachers expect excellent behaviour in school; they convey this to the students well and have robust systems to ensure that there is a very high standard of behaviour. As a result, behaviour in the school is outstanding. Lessons provide students with opportunities to learn and research independently. When they are taught as a group, they take part in lively discussions and debates and offer their own opinions and insights. Students are consistently interested and engaged in lessons; they enjoy learning, are inquisitive

and assert their opinions. Generally, teachers have very good subject knowledge and they often share ideas with each other during lessons. This provides students with real insights into the ways that adults interact intellectually.

Assessment arrangements are outstanding. When students join the school, they are assessed according to ability in conjunction with previous school records and relevant reports. Baseline assessments form a strong basis for their individualised programmes of study. This area of the school's assessment arrangements has significantly improved since the last inspection. Work is marked regularly and constructive comments ensure that students know exactly where they need to improve. Teachers discuss objectives with students on a daily basis and progress is charted through teacher and student tracking sheets. The school carries out formal assessments twice a year. These inform the constant development of individualised learning programmes, schemes of work and planning. As a result of an exceptional learning environment and a drive for excellence combined with outstanding teaching and assessment arrangements, students make outstanding progress.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. Students become attuned to spirituality through elements of art and outdoor activities, especially gardening where they plant fruit and vegetables that they prepare and share together. Music and music technology give students valuable opportunities to reflect and explore their emotions. Many of the students at the school come from very disadvantaged backgrounds. In most cases, this has resulted in extremely challenging behaviour. The school addresses these difficulties by providing a caring, supportive environment where students mature into responsible, productive adults. All students are provided with intensive therapy to address their needs and equip them for the future. Almost all students engage in therapy fully and this has a profound impact on their lives.

Students take part in many activities that promote self-esteem and confidence. They are encouraged to assert themselves and take part in lively discussions in lessons and informally. Many discussions involve ethical and moral issues such as homophobia and prejudice. The garden project provides students with an appreciation of teamwork. Students are encouraged to show initiative and accept responsibility for their behaviour at every turn.

Students socialise during break times under the guidance of their care workers. In school, they are very respectful and courteous and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. During the inspection, one young person offered the inspector a chair, another, a hot drink. Discussions with students reveal that they are very positive about the education that they receive and that they hold their teachers in very high regard. In a pre-inspection questionnaire, one young person commented, 'I have nice teachers!' Behaviour is consistently outstanding and attendance is very good.

Students learn about other cultures through personal, social and health education. They learn about Aboriginal art, African and South American music and try food unique to different parts of the world. They are articulate when they discuss issues

regarding racism and prejudice and understand that equality must be at the core of a civil society. Although students discuss a variety of world religions and beliefs with their teachers, religious education does not feature in the syllabus. This restricts their knowledge and understanding. Teachers take every opportunity to discuss current events to broaden students' understanding of moral and social issues. Students gain a broad general knowledge of public services and institutions through citizenship, history and PSHE. Due to the nature of the students' difficulties, it is challenging for the school to establish meaningful links with members of the wider community but it is exploring ways of making this possible.

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

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students is outstanding. Supervision levels are excellent and staff go to great lengths to ensure that students are safe at all times. Students feel very safe and report that bullying does not occur in school. School and care staff meet regularly and discuss the welfare of each student in great detail. They work together very well to ensure that students receive appropriate care and support. The school promotes healthy lifestyles very effectively through challenging sporting activities and a keen focus on nutrition. Students eat fruit during meals and most do not smoke. Those that do are encouraged to attend smoking cessation courses, or at the very least cut down their consumption.

Procedures to safeguard students and for child protection are very robust. All relevant policies, including those for child protection, are extensive and staff are trained to an advanced level. The designated person for child protection attends all inter-agency meetings. There is effective provision for first aid and a first-aider is on site at all times. All necessary risk assessments for the premises and school trips are routinely carried out for individuals and groups. Fire checks are conducted for the premises and equipment; fire drills are regular events that are recorded carefully. Admission and attendance registers comply fully with the requirements. The school has an appropriate three-year plan to increase accessibility, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

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

The school has good recruitment procedures in place and ensures that all staff have undergone the necessary checks before commencing work at the school. All staff have the required enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau and details of all required checks are recorded in the single central register.

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

The school's premises and accommodation provide for effective learning and the classrooms enable effective teaching of the full curriculum. The building is safe and the school complies with all safety regulations. The outdoor area is used effectively for gardening activities. During breaks, students have plenty of outdoor space to relax or engage in sports.

## **Provision of information**

Parents and carers are provided with clear, accurate and up-to-date information about the activities of the school through the school prospectus. Progress reports are issued twice a year.

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

The procedures for handling complaints are clear and comply fully with the requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets 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 points for development.

- Improve resources for information and communication technology (ICT) to include safe access to the internet.
- Explore ways to develop links with members of the local community.
- Enhance the curriculum in order to further expand students' knowledge of other religions and cultures.

## 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 emotional, social and behavioural difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2001		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–18 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 0	Total: 6
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 0	Total: 6
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£171,600		
<b>Address of school</b>	73 Taunton Road Ashton-Under-Lyne OL7 9DU		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 343 4539		
<b>Email address</b>	limes.education@northern-care.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Barber		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Phil Holt		

**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.**



12 July 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Lime Meadows, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL7 9DU**

I thoroughly enjoyed inspecting your school. I found you to be welcoming and courteous and was especially impressed by your excellent behaviour. As you know, I spent my time in school observing lessons, reading your questionnaire responses and examining the school's paperwork. In addition to this, I had meetings with various members of staff. The inspection found that the education provided by your school is outstanding and that you make outstanding progress in your learning and personal development. The ways in which the school supports your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. You are very well cared for in school and the provision for your welfare, health and safety at the school is outstanding.

I suggested that the school should improve provision for information and communication technology, including improved access to the internet and that the school should provide enhanced opportunities to develop your understanding of different faiths and cultures. I also recommended that teachers explore ways for you to get involved with your local community. The school agreed with my suggestions and I am sure that it will implement changes that will improve your learning even further.

In my discussions with you, you expressed how much you like school and appreciate your teachers' efforts to provide you with a sound education. You commented on the ways that the school always seeks to build on your strengths. I am sure that you will take good advantage of your school's hard work and will develop into mature, responsible adults, keen to learn and succeed.

Many thanks for making the inspection so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Chanan Tomlin  
Lead Inspector