

Meadows School

Wardle Road, Wardle, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL12 9EN

Inspection dates

27–28 June 2012

Overall effectiveness

Good **2**

Pupils' achievement

Good 2

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good 2

Quality of teaching

Good 2

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding 1

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding 1

Leadership and management

Good 2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Leaders and managers have been effective in creating a school on many sites, all of consistently good quality, with flexible provision which meets the needs of students well.
- Outstanding arrangements for welfare, health and safety help students feel safe and make particularly strong gains in their personal development and behaviour.
- The outstanding curriculum is very well tailored to the needs and interests of students, so that they are well prepared for their future.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good so that students achieve well from their starting points.
- Procedures for safeguarding students are robust.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Teaching is not consistently good enough at developing basic literacy skills.
- Lesson observation has not been used to improve the performance of teachers.
- Although achievement is good overall it is variable as not all students become securely proficient in applying basic skills, particularly in literacy.

Compliance with the independent school standards

- The school meets all the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations')

Information about this inspection

- This was a pilot inspection of all the settings owned and run by Meadows Care where education is being delivered. This inspection was carried out with two days' notice for the Education Director. Individual school settings were not given notice of inspection.
- The inspectors visited each of the school sites to check on the suitability of the premises and learning environment. They observed 21 lessons taught by 13 different teachers; nine were observed on the day school site and the remainder were lessons taught at the residential settings. Discussions were held with students and staff.
- Students' behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school sites.
- The inspectors scrutinised examples of pupils' work and examined the school's documentation and records. They took account of the responses to questionnaires completed by 12 of the students and three completed by placing authorities.

Inspection team

Amraz Ali, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Saleem Hussain	Additional inspector
Peter Toft	Additional inspector
Kath Halifax	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Meadows School is a registered independent school. It consists of a special day school and fifteen children's homes where some students are also taught. All are located in and around the Oldham and Rochdale areas.
- The 25 teaching staff work across all sites, led by a headteacher.
- The school caters for young people with educational, social, emotional or behavioural difficulties or with learning disabilities. Most have a history of disrupted educational experiences, including poor attendance in their previous schools.
- The school is registered for 43 students aged from 10 to 19 across the 16 sites. There are currently 19 students on roll, seven boys and 12 girls. Five students have statements of special educational need and all are in the care of their local authority, which fund their places. Almost all are of white British origin, with a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The children's homes are separately registered with Ofsted to provide care for young people. Their reports may be found on Ofsted's website under reference numbers: SC361811; SC372117; SC063054; SC063197; SC064836; SC065189; SC065617; SC069198; SC066560; SC066072; SC390577; SC411030; SC416464; SC442864; SC382807.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is consistently good or outstanding by:
 - improving the effectiveness of marking and feedback to pupils so that they are clear about how to improve future work
 - training teaching staff in how to better aid the acquisition and practice of basic skills in early literacy and mathematics.
- Improve self-evaluation by:
 - providing staff training on effective lesson observation and feedback
 - developing an annual programme of lesson observations to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students' achievement is good overall. The majority of students, including those with special needs and of all backgrounds, make good progress in lessons and over time. This good progress is narrowing the gap between the attainment of these students and all students nationally. Even so, the standards students achieve are generally below the national average. This is because when they arrive at the school, students' attainment is typically well below that expected for their age and many have large gaps in their learning. A sharp focus on English and mathematics helps most students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills rapidly, and this enables them to successfully complete accredited courses and gain qualifications. This is especially so for those who remain at the school for significant periods of time. Almost all make gains in their English and mathematics skills so that they are able to read texts with improving accuracy and record appropriate answers to questions. However, a small number of students with exceptionally low levels of literacy skills do not make enough progress and their weak literacy skills act as a barrier to higher levels of attainment. For example, they need a high level of support to complete assessments and write at length, even though their verbal reasoning and explanations are good. One reason for this is that although teachers have good subject knowledge in the subjects that they teach, their wider knowledge of teaching early literacy skills is less well developed.

More able students do particularly well with some gaining GCSE qualifications; for example one student in 2011 achieved grade A* in mathematics. Typically, the majority of students secure qualifications in a range of subjects including functional skills in English and mathematics along with awards or certificates for personal effectiveness. A particular strength is the number of students who improve their employability skills, which is directly related to their work experiences in the salon at the day school site or in other external placements.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Good relationships between students and staff, along with teachers' high expectations, ensure that all of the settings, particularly the day school, provide a calm and orderly environment for learning. Pupils' behaviour is good because behaviour management strategies are applied consistently across all of the school sites. In a large majority of lessons behaviour was good and on occasions exemplary. This contributed significantly to the good progress students made. In a very small number of the residential settings some inappropriate behaviour was observed from students who had recently joined the school.

Students make significant gains in their attitudes to learning and their behaviour. This is demonstrated by the way that pupils progress from being taught individually at the residential sites to attending lessons at the day school or at local maintained schools. The students all understand that to be able to attend the day school they must sign-up to a clear code of conduct. Students themselves acknowledge significant gains in their attitudes, behaviour and engagement in education. For some these improvements are particularly impressive: for example, where their attendance rates have risen from almost

zero to 100%. However, there remain a few students who, in part due to their difficulties and despite the school's best efforts, still refuse to attend their lessons or engage in the full range of opportunities available.

The school's work to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective at all of the sites. Many students are thoughtful about their experiences, and talk candidly about how they now manage their anger and are developing strategies to deal with it. There is good provision for religious education, where the programme of study covers a wide range of faiths in Britain and abroad, and this enables students to value and respect others. Students have developed a good understanding of important public institutions, for example by learning about the monarchy and through visits to places of worship, police stations and magistrates courts.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of the teaching is good. A key factor in the effectiveness of the teaching is the very low student-to-teacher ratio. This allows teachers to get to know students' individual learning needs very well, intervene early and provide well-judged support. Lesson plans are highly personalised and take good account of the needs of individuals, course requirements or information from students' statements of special educational need. This helps most students to learn well and make good progress. However, some teachers' knowledge of the development of early literacy and numeracy skills is under-developed and this is adversely affecting the few students whose basic literacy is poor. Although there are cross-curricular links and planning specifically identifies key vocabulary opportunities, the widespread heavy dependence on worksheets mean that opportunities are missed to develop and practise writing skills in all subjects.

The students benefit from being taught by enthusiastic subject specialist teachers, whose knowledge of examination requirements is a particular strength. Teachers' questioning of students is good and is well used to check their understanding or extend their learning. Students' work is marked regularly and often contains encouraging comments which clearly help them to gain in self-esteem. However, teachers' written comments are not generally explicit enough to show students what they need to do to improve their work.

Good relationships between staff and students along with the effective management of behaviour ensure that classrooms are calm and orderly. A particular success has been in helping students to improve their attitudes, social skills and behaviour so that they are able, where appropriate, to attend lessons at the day school or to integrate into a mainstream school. Lessons at the day school get off to a prompt start. However, at some of the residential sites students' occasional reluctance to engage limits the progress they can make.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The curriculum is outstanding and extremely well matched to the needs of individual students. Underpinned by clear schemes of work, including published materials, it is flexible so that it can be adapted very well to support each student's specific needs. Consequently, the school is extremely successful at re-engaging students in education

and in developing positive attitudes to learning. This allows students of all abilities to do well over time and gain a wide variety of accredited qualifications.

Each student's highly individual programme includes a broad range of subjects including a detailed programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education as well as physical education. The programme provides very good opportunities for students to follow drama and dance courses, both using the drama studio at the day school and other flexible spaces at the residential sites.

A particular strength is the opportunity for developing employment skills connected to the salon on the day school site. This is exceptionally well used by many of the students to study hair and beauty: several students in Years 10 and 11 go on to work placements at a local salon. Students say that this type of experience is helping to improve their training and employment opportunities. Although there have been a number of other successful work placements, senior leaders and managers have correctly identified the need to broaden the range of work placements available to the eldest students. Good links with the connexions service and local colleges help students to secure college places when they leave.

The curriculum is greatly enriched by visits to places of interest which enhance students' learning experiences. A broad and relevant range of after-school opportunities, provided in partnership with care staff, support their learning and personal development very well.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The extremely robust procedures for identifying and minimising risks to students at each of the school sites ensure that students are safe. Staff training is a particular strength of the school and has ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are robust. The designated officers for child protection and all staff are well trained; all receive timely, accredited training in safeguarding, first aid and other safety matters. A rigorous programme of training is underway to ensure that all staff are aware of their role in protecting students from sexual exploitation. All staff are thoroughly trained in managing behaviour. Detailed policies and procedures, covering all of the sites, coupled with a high level of training, ensure that staff have a clear understanding of their role in promoting students' safety and well-being. As a result of the consistent application of the rewards and sanctions policy, within a very short time of arriving at the school, students understand the consequences incurred by inappropriate behaviour.

There are excellent links with welfare and support agencies, and this has a strong impact on students' personal development. For example, links with social services, therapists and medical staff are effective at making sure that any concerns are shared and acted upon swiftly.

Students understand the need for adopting healthy lifestyles. They maintain their fitness levels through their participation in their weekly physical education lessons at a local sports centre along with taking part in after school sports activities. Almost all enjoy these activities. They have a good understanding about healthy eating, which is fostered at the 'Friday Lunchtime Club', where they learn to prepare healthy meals. One student,

for example, explained clearly why vegetables and fresh fruit were essential for a healthy diet and how to include them in a nutritionally well-balanced meal. Programmes to help students to understand the impact of smoking and substance misuse are having an excellent impact and students who are actively trying to change their habits are well supported. For example, students are particularly keen to attend the day school and understand that they have to stop smoking to do so. One student commented that her desire to attend more lessons at the day school has made her more determined to stop.

Thorough procedures are in place for fire safety and first aid at each site. A dedicated team ensures that standards of maintenance are extremely high at all school sites.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and senior team have successfully developed the school so that all students receive a good well-rounded education on its many sites. Group-wide systems, such as a common format for lesson planning and a consistent approach to behaviour management are significant contributory factors.

The school is owned and operated by Meadows Care, which has its registered office on the upper floors of the day school site. There is not a governing body but strategic responsibility for the management and direction of the schools rest with the two directors who work in partnership with the headteacher.

The effective arrangements for assessing and tracking the attainment and progress of students, using online testing procedures in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology, ensure that problems can be diagnosed and rectified quickly. These are complemented by very effective procedures for judging how well students are making progress in their personal development and behaviour.

Self-evaluation is largely accurate, thus leaders and managers are aware of the school's most significant strengths and areas for improvement. There are some systems in place for monitoring the work of the teaching workforce, such as routinely checking that lesson plans and learning environments comply with the school policies. However, the use of first hand observations of lessons to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching is underdeveloped as a tool for improving the quality of teaching. There is a strong commitment to training and the workforce is generally well trained, but further training for some staff is needed in methods of teaching numeracy and early literacy skills.

The school provides parents, carers and others with all of the required information through its prospectus. Parents and carers also receive a half-termly written report on the progress of their child. The school's procedures for handling complaints are clear and concise and meet the requirements for independent schools. The senior staff have ensured that the premises and accommodation are suitable and safe on all school sites, and that the independent school standards are met.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	136257
Inspection number	
DfE registration number	354/6202
<i>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.</i>	

School status	Independent
Type of school	Group provision of education for looked after children
Age range of pupils	10–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Meadows Care
Chair	
Headteacher	Shellie Barcroft
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,700
Telephone number	01706 630022
Email address	ShellieBarcroft@meadowscare.co.uk

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