

Meade Hill School

Chain Road, Higher Blackley, Manchester, M9 6GN

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Almost all students arrive here with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age. This is because of the disruptions to their education that they have experienced owing to their learning difficulties.
- Within a few weeks of joining, however, most begin to moderate their behaviour and successfully take part in lessons. This is because students receive such effective support from the staff.
- Students' achievement improves and they rapidly make up lost ground. Progress is particularly noticeable in literacy and numeracy.
- Students' progress is good because teaching is good. Much teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting lessons and students are supported well in classes.
- Students feel very safe in school. They enjoy lessons. Their behaviour is outstanding.
- For most students attendance is higher than expected in a special school.
- Students make great gains personally throughout their time here. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are outstanding.
- Through good leadership and management teaching and learning have improved well since the last inspection.
- Leaders and managers know the school well. They clearly understand its strengths and weaknesses. Their judgements are accurate and have led to suitable planning for further improvements to take place.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The Interim Executive Body (IEB), providing governance for the federation to which the school belongs, does not give direct support and challenge to managers. Furthermore, the IEB does not closely represent the views of parents, staff and the community.
- A very few students fail to attend regularly.
- Teachers do not always challenge students with the very small steps of learning that would help them to make the best progress.
- The school does not have systems capable of gathering information about the very small steps of progress that students should make.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed four lessons given by four teachers, made a number of short visits to classrooms and spent around three hours watching teaching and learning. A school assembly was visited and students' reading was seen and heard including throughout a whole-school reading session.
- The inspector watched students arrive at school in the morning and leave in the afternoon. Breaktimes and lunch were observed.
- Students' books and folders were studied and the inspector spoke with students to gain their views and opinions.
- Meetings were held with the federation manager, the Head of Centre and other members of staff including those with specific responsibilities. The inspector had meetings with three parents and one member of the IEB. Telephone conversations took place with the Chair of the IEB and a representative of the local authority.
- The views of staff were noted through meeting with them and by scrutinising their returned questionnaires.
- There were insufficient responses to the on-line (Parent View) questionnaire but the views of those parents who met with the inspector were noted.
- The work of the school was observed and important documents concerning planning, self-evaluation, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the progress of students were looked at.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Meade Hill School admits boys and girls in Key Stage 3 who have a statement of special educational needs in respect of their behavioural, social and emotional difficulties (BESD). Students can enrol here at any time between the ages of 11 and 14.
- Currently, there are very few girls. More than half of all students are known to be entitled to the pupil premium funding and this is very much above the national average. The very great majority of students are of White British heritage.
- Most students come from the northern parts of Manchester but a few travel from other areas of the city and experience lengthy journeys each day. Transport for all students is provided by the local authority.
- Since the last inspection the school has continued to be part of the Manchester Federation of BESD schools that has been provided with governance for around seven years by an executive body (IEB). In the recent past Meade Hill has been inspected as part of the federation and this is the first time for some years that the school has been inspected in its own right.
- Until very recently the federation was managed by an Executive Principal on behalf of the IEB but this post was replaced in December last by that of a manager in charge of the day schools in the federation and a headteacher in the residential school. Since the last inspection the Head of Centre at Meade Hill has been appointed and changes have been made to the structure of the staffing. Until this year, most staff were temporary. Within the last year the school building has been altered and enlarged slightly.
- Beyond the federation there are no formal partnerships but some informal arrangements are beginning to be made with other local schools to share resources. There is no alternative education but two students attend the local authority library service for a few hours each week; these arrangements did not take place during the time of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The federation, local authority and Department for Education must, as a matter of urgency, complete the arrangements underway to ensure that the school has a formal governing body so that detailed support and challenge can be provided to school managers, and the views of parents, staff and the community can be represented.
- The school must continue to work with the local authority to ensure that every effort is made to persuade the very few students who are persistent absentees to attend more regularly.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that students have the best possible chances of making outstanding progress in lessons by:
 - directing teachers to plan for individual students to make very small steps in their learning
 - devising systems for the school that are capable of measuring and recording the very small steps of learning that students can make in their lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their low starting points upon arrival at the school all groups of students make good progress including boys, girls and those from minority ethnic groups. This is confirmed by the school's own records that provide useful comparisons with how students perform compared to other similar schools locally and nationally. Students make good progress during lessons. For some, when classroom tasks are particularly well matched to students' interests and ability, progress is outstanding.
- Students supported by the pupil premium funding do particularly well in gaining literacy and numeracy skills. They begin to make up for lost ground in reading and writing through the specialist work that supports them. As a result, this group of students make progress in literacy and numeracy that is as good as that of all other students.
- The school ensures that students have plenty of time and opportunity for reading and writing. For example, every day the whole school spends 15 minutes in quiet and paired reading. During this time older students support the reading of those in Year 7. When questioned, students reported that the paired reading is valuable to them because they get to know each other better and their relationships improve as a result.
- Furthermore, when this was observed the inspector witnessed how older students help younger students improve their reading and tackle unknown words through using the sounds that letters make (phonics) in the same way as the staff do.
- In mathematics lessons students settle to their work quickly and willingly. They enjoy this area of learning and achieve well.
- Students make such good progress because they take part in lessons. With the help of the skilled staff they overcome their difficulties and behave well in class. Students concentrate and listen to the teachers. They attempt the classroom activities and are keen to succeed.
- By the time they move on to the separate school for Key Stage 4 almost all have made up much of their lost ground and are prepared very well for moving on.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is never less than good and often outstanding. This is because of the great thought that teachers give to helping students get the most from their lessons.
- The teaching and learning environment of the school is superb. Teachers take a lot of trouble to ensure that classrooms are uncluttered and attractively decorated with displays. Marking and feedback to students is of a high standard. Teachers manage their work spaces well including by directing the work of other adults in class to support students' learning.
- Students' work is displayed throughout the school. When questioned, students demonstrate pride in their achievements. Parents remark that there is always a business-like and purposeful atmosphere in the school that encourages learning.
- Teachers use a wide range of resources including computers and electronic whiteboards. They often give practical demonstrations to help students understand ideas better. This was seen in a geography lesson when the teacher showed students how the plates of the earth are pushed around by the materials below. These teaching methods help students remain interested and alert to what is happening.
- Teachers use information about students' previous learning well so that they can set challenges for them. Most help students to understand how well they are doing and the rate at which they are moving forward in their learning. However, chances are often missed to set very small-step individual targets for students during lessons that would enable them to make progress more rapidly and to firm-up their learning even better.

- In almost every lesson literacy and numeracy have a high priority. Teachers are keen to encourage these skills as part of the work of all subjects. Furthermore, at regular intervals throughout the year all students undertake a piece of unaided writing that, when tidied, is displayed throughout the school. The everyday attention to reading and writing constantly reminds students of the importance of these aspects of their education.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- At the time of the inspection, in lessons and throughout the school, students' behaviour was outstanding. This is because the classrooms are tidy and well organised and enable students to start work quickly. Furthermore, the clear systems of rewards and sanctions that have been introduced by managers work effectively.
- The adults have high expectations of students. Consequently, their behaviour for learning in class is excellent; they concentrate very well and listen carefully to the teacher and other adults that support them. Generally, students complete tasks without complaint. This is because they have interesting things to do and teachers match the work carefully to students' needs and interests.
- Students report that they feel very safe in school and this is confirmed by parents and by staff. They all say that bullying is almost unknown and that any issues are quickly dealt with by staff.
- The great majority attend well because school is so meaningful to them. Since the last inspection the rates of attendance have soared so that now they are running at close to national averages for all secondary schools and well in excess of the average attendance for special schools.
- Nevertheless, a very small group do not attend as often as they should. The school and the local authority must not relax their efforts in attempting to persuade all to attend regularly.
- The adults demonstrate skill and patience in dealing with the students and their difficulties. Nevertheless, staff morale is high and they appear keen to support the policies implemented by managers. Through this cooperative approach the number of physical restraints by staff has diminished and exclusions are now almost unknown.
- The adults gain the trust of students and this allows them to feel safe and happy in school. As a result, students' self-esteem and self-confidence rises quickly and they become capable of taking part in lessons and they gain more success as a result. Throughout their time at the school students make great gains personally and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are outstanding.

The leadership and management are good

- Managers know and understand the school well. They are acutely aware of its strengths and weaknesses and plan accurately to further improve the school.
- Some of the work of leaders is outstanding such as the highly effective rewards systems that encourage students to manage their own behaviour.
- The Head of Centre has identified potentially difficult times during the school day and encouraged staff to be aware of these. This was seen when students went to a mathematics class following breaktime. They settled rapidly because of the interesting activities quickly introduced by the teacher. This episode also demonstrated that the elimination of potential 'flashpoints' such as at the start of lessons helps students relax into learning.
- Recent work done with parents is of high quality. Parents greatly appreciate that the school keeps them so closely informed about their children's behaviour and progress. They speak highly of the headteacher and staff. One reported: 'This is such a marvellous place – all children should be able to attend!'
- Despite difficulties with establishing permanent staff the quality of teaching has remained high

since the last inspection. This is because of the effective performance management systems. There is now a clear relationship between staff performance and pay.

- The good curriculum ensures that all can fill in the gaps in their learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Upon entry students are given the chance to settle in through more individual learning programmes that include art therapy, gardening and helping to look after the school chickens.
- Through the carefully thought out study programmes and by looking closely at teachers' records managers ensure that all students are included and none discriminated against. However, the school has not yet developed a system that is capable of recording the very small steps of progress that could show students' gains lesson by lesson.
- Managers have put the pupil premium funding to good use to benefit those entitled. A teaching assistant has been employed specifically to help this group of students with reading, and all staff have received training in supporting literacy. Special equipment to aid literacy development has been purchased to encourage students to read and write more frequently.
- The improved attendance is a considerable achievement for managers and for the local authority that provides transport for all students.
- The local authority also pays for the school improvement partner and it has made resources available for a few students to attend its specialist library service.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The IEB has been effective in providing strategic support to Meade Hill as part of the federation of BESD schools in the local authority. For example, it has helped to generally raise standards by ensuring that funding has been available to aid staff stability. The IEB has encouraged Meade Hill to share resources with other schools in the federation and establish links with neighbouring schools. It has delegated some governing body responsibilities to the federation manager such as ensuring that the pupil premium funding is correctly allocated in this school and that safeguarding at Meade Hill meets all of the requirements. The federation manager reports to the IEB about how students achieve together with the details of performance management undertaken for all staff and the quality of teaching. This ensures that the school is supported in tackling any underperformance of teachers and that their good work is rewarded. However, the school now urgently requires a more traditional governing body that can represent the views of parents, staff and the community whilst providing direct support and challenge to school managers.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105614
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	405003

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	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Newman
Head of Centre	George Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2011
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