

Meadow Wood School

Coldharbour Lane, Bushey, WD23 4NN

Inspection dates 24–25 January 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The vast majority of pupils, including those with additional special educational needs, achieve well. Progress in early communication, language and literacy, including matching letters and sounds, is good.
- Good teaching means that most pupils achieve well in their activities. In the best teaching, staff extend pupil's language and understanding through aiming high, sensitive support and detailed questioning.
- Parents are rightly pleased with the school and say that their children really enjoy coming and achieve well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are safe and secure at school.
- Pupils have exciting learning experiences and access to specialist resources, which engage them well.
- Pupils are extremely well cared for. The wide range of therapies contribute very well to their learning.
- Through their efficient planning, the governing body makes sure that money is spent well for the benefit of all groups of pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for additional funding.
- Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has a clear vision and places a high focus on improving the performance of staff through high quality training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough to bring about outstanding achievement.
- The school does not make best use of teaching assistants in supporting pupils in literacy or numeracy.
- At times, tasks are not demanding enough for pupils of different abilities.
- In a very few lessons communication aids are not used well enough to meet the needs of every pupil.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, most of them jointly with the headteacher. In addition the inspector made a few short visits to different sessions to observe pupils' activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior teachers, a group of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and pupils' profiles.
- The inspector took account of the 12 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and spoke to four parents during the inspection. Questionnaires were received from five staff members.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Meadow Wood is a special school for pupils with a statement of special educational needs for their physical and neurological impairments. Several pupils have additional complex needs including learning difficulties, visual or hearing impairments, epilepsy and/or medical needs.
- Pupils use a wide range of technological communication aids and almost all are wheelchair users.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and pupils with a parent in the armed forces) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average.
- The school has integrated provision to provide for pupils' educational, health and social care needs. This includes on-site nursing, physiotherapy, speech therapy and its own large swimming pool.
- No alternative off-site provision is used by the school.
- The headteacher is new to the school this term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching so that all groups of pupils make even better progress by:
 - making better use of teaching assistants to support individual pupils and small groups, particularly in numeracy and literacy lessons
 - increasing the use of technology so that it meets the communication needs of every pupil
 - making sure that activities are sufficiently demanding for pupils of all abilities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils, including those with additional special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well during their time at Meadow Wood. As a result, they make good progress, achieving particularly well in communication, literacy and in their personal development.
- Pupils are happy to come to school each day and are eager to greet staff. Most show high levels of enjoyment and quickly settle and make friends.
- The good focus on improving pupils' social skills and confidence is evident in the way they are encouraged to do things for themselves whenever they can. For example, they are regularly required to make choices and respond to questions using a range of communication aids.
- Younger pupils are well prepared for their futures as they learn to listen to stories and recognise initial sounds in words. The emphasis on linking letters and sounds gives them a good understanding of early reading and writing.
- Older pupils showed that they are developing good language skills as they used their voices or their communication aids to talk to the inspector about their school. They said that they really enjoy swimming. They talked enthusiastically about their whole-school trip on the train to the Paralympics last summer, showing very high levels of enthusiasm and excitement at seeing people in wheelchairs taking part in the games.
- The school focuses particularly on developing pupils' independence. The vast majority of pupils are encouraged to take a lead in their own learning, make decisions and share with others, taking turns well. Very occasionally this does not happen because teaching assistants are not deployed well enough to prompt pupils and communication aids are not evident.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve well because of their full inclusion in all activities. The extra funds are used to employ additional staffing to meet these pupils' individual needs. As a result they achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do as well as other pupils nationally.
- Parents are rightly pleased with their children's progress. 'The school is amazing, we are so pleased with the way our child has improved' commented one parent.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching is evident in all areas of the school. In the best lessons teachers provide exciting tasks that engage pupils and keep their interest. Relationships are positive and lessons are calm and productive.
- Pupils' achievements are accurately recorded, often by observing their learning and noting outcomes, and sometimes through photographs. Records of achievement, including for the youngest children in the Nursery, are of a good quality showing a comprehensive record of past work.

- Activities are well planned and organised. Teachers expect the best from pupils. Older pupils, for example were observed playing African drums. Each pupil took turns to conduct the session, indicating in the best way that they could when drumming should start and finish. Pupils had lots of fun and learned how to play together and follow instructions.
- In the best lessons, questioning is used very well to develop pupil's communication skills and help them to make choices. At these times, skilled teachers frequently extend pupils' understanding by challenging them to find answers for themselves. An example of this was evident in design technology in Years 5 and 6 when pupils were investigating the best way to join paper and card. They worked hard to test different papers and make valid choices. They showed good levels of independence and learned new scientific vocabulary.
- Teaching assistants are usually well deployed to support individual needs and encourage learning. Pupils regularly work with them to share learning, such as in Years 3 and 4 when pupils shared copies of the book 'The Giant Turnip' looking at pictures, finding characters, and answering questions. Just occasionally, too little use is made of teaching assistants' skills, especially in supporting literacy and numeracy, and this results in too much waiting time for pupils to respond or take part. The pace of learning in such lessons dips and the level of challenge drops.
- Pupils benefit from good quality resources. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 really enjoyed their time in the swimming pool, squealing with delight as they anticipated their turn. They showed excellent levels of confidence in the water happily relaxing, stretching or splashing.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through celebrations of different cultures and through stories and songs and regular drama and assemblies, preparing them well for the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' eagerness to take part in all the school's activities is evident from the moment they arrive at school each day. They are keen to play with others and engage staff. They show their enthusiasm by smiling and joining in happily with all the activities. They say they feel safe at school.
 - Pupils get on well with each other. No evidence of any bullying was seen during the inspection and none is evident in the school's records. Older pupils told the inspector that everyone is kind.
 - Pupils have a clear understanding that eating vegetables and fruit is good for them. The school has introduced an innovative approach to mealtimes. Food is liquidised with each item of food kept separately so that pupils who find swallowing difficult can smell and taste different foods, and see the colours. This is proving successful in helping pupils who find swallowing difficult to have a varied diet, enjoy eating and keep healthy.
 - Pupils' attendance is improving and is broadly similar to that found in other special schools despite the high number of medical appointments.
 - Staff manage behaviour well and there are examples of pupils, who have difficulties with their emotional and social skills, improving their behaviour because of specific targets and the use of
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rewards. Parents rightly say that behaviour at the school is good and that their children are safe and secure.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders, staff and the governing body have successfully maintained good teaching and achievement despite several changes to leadership in the past year. They have further improved the high quality learning environment so it meets pupils' needs well. Effective use of the 'Teachers' Standards' shows the school's commitment to improving teaching for staff to develop their skills and seek promotion.
 - Leaders have made sure staff receive high levels of training and introduced many exciting and enjoyable experiences for pupils. For example pupils make regular visits into the community to the local shops, performing in their own theatrical presentations and going swimming.
 - Leaders at all levels are fully involved in improving teaching and seeking excellence. A very strong emphasis on supporting pupils' individual needs means that pupils do well whatever their difficulties. For example the few pupils with visual or hearing difficulties have regular access to specialist resources and support so that they can be fully included in all activities and make similar progress to their peers.
 - Performance is effectively monitored by the new headteacher and senior leaders and is well managed. For example, regular observations of teaching and learning by school leaders and the local authority make sure that leaders have an accurate view of how well the school is doing.
 - The local authority gives effective support to the school, especially in training staff and helping to improve teaching.
 - The school fosters good relations with parents, other schools and local support services.
 - Leaders make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities as demonstrated by a trip to the Paralympics. No evidence of any discrimination was seen during the inspection and none was evident in records.
 - Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body gives clear direction to the school, promoting values in which pupils thrive. Governors are regular visitors and are very supportive of leaders. They evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement, receiving regular updates and reports. They fully understand the importance of managing the performance of staff and allocate sufficient funding to good quality training to see that teaching continues to improve. They manage the school's finances very well and make sure additional money allocated for the support of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium benefits those pupils. Governors understand the importance of improving the quality of teaching and they make effective use of the 'Teachers' Standards' to do so. Good teachers are rewarded through the school's performance management structure and any underperformance is tackled through additional training, mentoring and regular monitoring.
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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	117691
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	408916

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Morris
Headteacher	Elizabeth Stratton
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2010
Telephone number	020 84204720
Fax number	020 84205497
Email address	head@meadowwood.herts.sch.uk

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