

Meadow View Learning Centre

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| Inspection dates | 24–26 September 2013 | |
| Overall effectiveness | Good | 2 |
| Pupils' achievement | Good | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour and personal development | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | Good | 2 |
| Quality of curriculum | Good | 2 |
| Pupils' welfare, health and safety | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Good quality teaching helps students to catch up with the learning they have previously lost. They make good progress in lessons and achieve well, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Staff accurately assess students when they arrive. Then they provide each with a good curriculum to help students develop important core skills and study areas of interest.
- The staff promote excellent relationships and provide a high quality of support for students to moderate their behaviour. This enables them to take a full part in school life and succeed in learning.
- In the short time since the school opened the headteacher has demonstrated effective leadership and management so that teaching is good and students' achievements are good.
- Leaders and managers undertake accurate evaluations. They know the school very well and understand how to continue to improve it.

It is not yet outstanding because

- The development of students' reading, despite plans for improvement, is not yet supported as well as it could be.
- Teachers do not always plan how to make the best use of writing in lessons.
- The targets set for students in lessons and over time are not sufficiently precise for them to understand exactly how to improve.
- The school has not yet implemented all of the planning for cultural education.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendments) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection occurred with one day's notice. The inspector held meetings with school staff and company managers.
- The inspector spoke to the students and observed them learning, spending around three hours in classes observing four teachers in six lessons and an assembly.
- Students' work and records of their achievements were examined.
- Staff and students' views were gained through discussions and by examining their questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to make an evaluation. Letters from local authority representatives were seen.
- Documents, policies and records concerning the management of the school were studied.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This small mixed day school provides education for students from eight to 16 years although current students are 13 and 14 years old. None has yet completed externally accredited courses.
- Students are placed here following periods of prolonged disruption to their education in previous educational settings and all are resident with the company that owns the school. Meadow View admits students with a statement of special educational needs in respect of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties but most experience other complex barriers to their learning including specific and communication difficulties.
- The Witherslack Group owns the school. It sets out to provide an individualised and tailored approach to meeting students' needs using the experience, skills and resources that it has in therapy, education and care. Some students take part in vocational education at a workshop owned by the company at another of its registered schools. During the period of the inspection no students attended this facility.
- The school was opened in September 2012. This is its first inspection by Ofsted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The headteacher and company managers must ensure that students have the best opportunities to make the maximum possible progress by:
 - introducing daily structured reading sessions
 - ensuring that teachers always write clearly, and plan lessons to help students improve their writing
 - constructing targets for students' learning and progress that are sufficiently concise for them to understand what they need to do to improve their learning.
- The headteacher must continue to implement the curriculum plans so that students have even better opportunities to learn about others from different backgrounds and cultures.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

The students' achievement is good. All of them have experienced previous turmoil in their lives and great disruption to their education. Upon entry their standards are very low compared with national averages. However, students are rapidly encouraged to attend school regularly and take part in lessons. They begin to make up the lost ground and close the gaps with those in mainstream schools. Their gains in English and mathematics are particularly noticeable. Students' core skills improve rapidly so that they become capable of studying courses such as GCSE and functional skills. Nevertheless, students would be even better equipped to gain qualifications if their opportunities for reading development were enhanced even further through the provision of more regular structured reading sessions.

The robust monitoring systems show that students make rapid progress in all subjects following entry to the school. Information about students' learning and progress is shared regularly with them so they know how well they are doing. Even those disenchanted by their previous experiences in education re-establish their confidence. They begin to take pride in their work. For example, students spontaneously brought their books and folders to the inspector to show off their achievements. In the lessons observed, even the most challenging learners overcame their difficulties and completed tasks with the skilful help of staff. Students' standards remain below those expected nationally but the evidence from lessons and from the school's records indicate that they are achieving well given their low starting points.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development are good and all rapidly improve their behaviour following entry because of the effective strategies used by staff. This also enables the students to make good academic progress. Students recognise the persistent efforts of staff and praise them. One said 'The staff manage me well and that is why I go to lessons!'

Students' attendance is very high and they are punctual to lessons. On occasions students require time alone. When this happens staff ensure it is not an opportunity to avoid work. Students' attitudes to learning are generally good and on occasions outstanding, but where behaviour slips it is usually because the pace of the lesson has slowed. Throughout the school behaviour is generally good because students are well supervised, including during break times.

Serious incidents occur from time to time but school records show that for each student these incidents diminish over time. This is because of the effectiveness of the behaviour management systems and the success the school has in helping students understand more about right and wrong. Through spending time in the school students become more reluctant to challenge staff because of the positive relationships they have developed. For those who have been in the school the longest, aspects of their social and moral development are already outstanding.

All of the regulations for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are met and the provision for it is good. However, through further improving the curriculum greater opportunities should be provided for students to learn about the lives and work of others from different backgrounds and cultures. By studying personal, social and health education and citizenship students learn about the public institutions and services in England. They also explore the different forms of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. Bullying and harassment are rare and students trust the staff to resolve any difficulties quickly. The Witherslack Group has made it clear that political and religious extremism will not be tolerated and that balanced views must always be presented to students.

Quality of teaching**Good**

Teaching is mostly good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons students learn effectively, making at least good progress and enthusiastically completing tasks. Teachers encourage accurate writing in all subjects. However, on occasions teachers use handwriting that is difficult for those with the lowest levels of reading to understand. Teachers should prepare written materials and use interactive whiteboards to project writing in a way that is accessible to all. Similarly, tasks given to students sometimes require writing that is superfluous and could be substituted with activities designed to maintain the pace of learning while still allowing information to be recorded succinctly.

Teachers mark work regularly, providing good feedback to students. Teachers use assessment information to help students understand how well they are progressing over time. However, while the purpose of lessons is always clear, targets for some students are too vague and they are not always sure exactly what is expected of them. Nevertheless, teachers provide interesting lessons designed to capture the imagination of students and keep their concentration. Classrooms are well equipped so that students can undertake individual work and learn at their own pace. Classroom assistants are directed well to support students' learning and are experienced in supporting them on a one-to-one basis.

Teachers plan lessons well and in accordance with their longer-term plans and courses. Consequently, students' learning always moves logically from one stage to the next. The headteacher monitors planning to ensure that lessons are well matched to students' abilities and interests, ensuring that lessons are proceed smoothly.

Quality of curriculum**Good**

The good curriculum already provides plenty of opportunities for students to learn and make progress. It is particularly effective in ensuring they fill in gaps in their learning in English and mathematics. Courses provided to students are very individual and stem from the assessments undertaken when they arrive in the school. The system is flexible enough for changes to occur when necessary and it is always possible for the school to rearrange study programmes to ensure students continue to attend regularly and gain necessary skills.

The curriculum includes all the required areas of learning for an independent school and is suitable for all students who have a statement of special educational needs. In Key Stage 3 the emphasis is on catching up any areas of lost learning. Younger students are encouraged to think about what lies ahead and which courses might be suitable for them in Key Stage 4. Older students follow externally accredited courses such as GCSE and functional skills. Occasionally, students study Entry Level Certificate courses, and in gaining success their self-confidence and self-esteem grow, so that they are able to move on to studies better matched to their ability. Vocational and practical education is provided on another site owned by the company. Here, students can gain vocational qualifications that together with their English, mathematics and science, will help prepare them for moving on to the next stage of their lives.

The school encourages students to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills but the plans to introduce structured reading sessions have not yet been implemented. Consequently, students are not making as much progress in reading development as they could and this is preventing some of their learning from being outstanding. The school liaises well with the students' residences, and care staff support homework and other activities. Through the intensive efforts of staff one student now plays football for a local youth team whilst another joins in with rugby training at a local club. These are remarkable achievements of the school and care staff and huge successes for the students given their low levels of personal development upon arrival.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and some aspects such as the maintenance of records are outstanding. Students are thoroughly protected when in school and off site. The required policies and procedures concerning students' welfare health and safety are often exemplary, comply with the regulations and are reviewed regularly. High standards of recruitment are in place and all of the required checks are made on the suitability of prospective staff and maintained in an appropriate single central register. Agency staff are not employed. All staff are trained appropriately in safeguarding. The headteacher and another staff member have undertaken higher levels of training to act as designated persons for safeguarding. There is good liaison with the students' residences. Good relationships have been established already between the school and the local authority safeguarding board.

Staff and students are clear about reporting any concerns to a designated person. Through the curriculum, students learn how to keep themselves safe in respect of sex and relationships, drugs and alcohol. Clear guidance is provided to staff by the prevention of bullying policy that clearly defines the different forms of bullying and how to deal with it. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to support the health and safety of students when they undertake practical work and physical education in school, offsite visits and vocational education. The required arrangements for first aid, fire safety and the maintenance of fire fighting equipment are in place. Regular practice evacuations are undertaken and recorded correctly.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management by the head teacher and company managers are good. Some aspects are outstanding. All regulations for independent schools are met. Since the school opened a year ago managers have been unrelenting in their efforts to ensure that students receive high quality education. Robust systems have been introduced for managing the performance of all staff in school, resulting in the quality of lessons steadily improving. Company managers have ensured the work of the headteacher has been appraised and appropriate targets for improvement set. Methods for managing the behaviour of distressed students have been in place since the school opened and at this early stage the school is successful in providing education and is not just focused on managing behaviour.

Methods that can measure students' standards when they enter the school have been implemented. Students' progress is reviewed regularly to ensure they are on track to meet their targets. However, occasionally the targets set over the longer term are too broad and not sufficiently concise to explain to students exactly what is needed for them to improve. Nevertheless, in most respects the managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well and their plans for future development are based on this knowledge.

Since opening, the school has worked relentlessly to ensure good relationships exist with the local community and others. For example, during the inspection staff and students worked together to prepare for a charity coffee morning. Letters and emails held by the school indicate local authority placement officers and others are very impressed with the successes enjoyed by students placed here, particularly in relation to their personal developments and educational advances. The premises and accommodation of the school are entirely suitable. Arrangements are in place to provide all of the required information to parents, carers and others. Procedures for handling complaints fully comply with the regulations.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses. |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138868 |
| Inspection number | 422831 |
| DfE registration number | 888/6045 |

This inspection was carried out 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.

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| Type of school | Special day school |
| School status | Independent School |
| Age range of pupils | 8-16 years |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 5 |
| Number of part time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | The Witherslack Group |
| Chair | Howard Tennant |
| Headteacher | Chris Ormiston |
| Date of previous school inspection | N/A |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £40,752 to £55,057 |
| Telephone number | 01254 833579 |
| Email address | Chris.ormiston@witherslackgroup.co.uk |

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