

# Meadows School

Wardle Road, Wardle, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 9EN

**Inspection dates** 19–21 April 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. She is well supported by other leaders and members of staff. All are committed to achieving the best for pupils.
- Expectations are high and staff morale is good.
- The school is a positive learning community which offers good support for pupils, including access to therapists when needed.
- Leaders have introduced rigorous systems to check on teachers' work. These are helping teachers to improve teaching and learning.
- Other aspects of the school are also improving. Poor behaviour is less frequent and, while remaining low overall, attendance is increasing.
- Staff know pupils very well and use this knowledge to plan and deliver effective teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils make good progress despite frequently having experienced disrupted education in the past.
- Pupils generally behave well. There are well-understood systems for dealing with instances of poor behaviour.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 11 in 2015 all achieved at least one qualification and all went on to education or training.
- Safeguarding pupils is given a very high priority. Pupils are safe in school.
- Governance has been strengthened by the recent introduction of a governing body, extending the proprietor's previous role.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While leaders have ensured that shared working between school staff, therapists and care staff is developing, the approaches taken in the school and the linked children's homes could be even more closely aligned.
- The governing body is at an early stage of its development and does not yet offer sufficient support and challenge to leaders
- The school's website is difficult to locate and out of date.
- The careers education offered to key stage 3 pupils is not detailed enough.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the links between the education, care and therapy provided to pupils, and in particular between education and care, so that:
  - pupils' education is developed equally in school and at home
  - pupils' attendance improves.
- Extend pupils' longer term views of their future by providing more detail in the careers education offered for key stage 3 pupils.
- Enhance governors' skills so that they can develop their strategic oversight and independently shape the work of the school.
- Ensure the school website is easy to access and is kept fully up to date so that information about the school is readily available.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides decisive and effective leadership. She has successfully developed a team approach among staff centred on the commitment to give pupils the best education possible. The ultimate aim of the school is for pupils to be able to return to mainstream education. It is heartening to hear about the school's successes in achieving this, despite pupils' often very difficult previous educational and life experiences.
- The headteacher's principled vision for the school is shared by staff. Her very high expectations of staff and pupils challenge all involved to make sure teaching and learning work well. The staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire to share their views were strongly supportive of the work of leaders. Despite the reduction in the size of the staff team and the high proportion of staff new to the school, morale is good.
- The roles of senior and middle leaders in the school have been reviewed and are clear. Training has been identified to help senior colleagues to develop their skills and become increasingly effective in their roles. Leaders have driven forward change and improvement in the school and this is continuing.
- Senior leaders know the school very well. They have an honest and accurate view of the strengths and current areas for development in the school. Their self-evaluation document is detailed and leaders use it to identify actions to bring about improvement. These are acted on and then checked to make sure they are having the impact expected.
- A regular and systematic programme of training is in place for all staff. This includes aspects of teaching and learning and other important issues including the safeguarding of pupils. The school uses sessions led by consultants from outside the school but does not rely on these exclusively; other activities that directly relate to pupils' needs are led by Meadow's care therapists. In addition, findings from senior leaders' careful review of teachers' work are used to identify how teachers can improve. Support and advice is then provided by leaders to help them do so. Evidence provided by leaders from repeated cycles of monitoring teaching and learning in school show that this is becoming increasingly effective.
- Lessons are organised to give pupils experience of a wide range of subjects. These include a core of: English; mathematics; science; information technology; personal, social and health education; and physical education. Pupils also study other subjects such as art, drama, food technology and psychology. Each pupil has an individual timetable which is determined by their needs. For some pupils, part of this is delivered in the education rooms in their children's homes.
- Leaders recognise that it is important for pupils to develop broader skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and underpins all its other work. Staff seize opportunities to develop such skills, for example through the celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday. Pupils make regular visits to other locations and organisations where these add to their learning, for example to the fire and rescue service to build their understanding of safe and considerate behaviour. Teachers see the development of British values including tolerance and respect as essential in meeting pupils' overall needs and therefore ensure that this work is effective.
- Leaders and other members of staff communicate well with those who have parental responsibility. This includes daily contact between school and the children's homes to ensure that important information is shared. Termly celebration events are used to recognise pupils' achievements. However, the school's website contains old information and is difficult to locate. This makes it harder for any person or organisation wanting to know about the school to find the information they need.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The school has recently introduced a governing body to provide more effective support and challenge to school leaders than was possible by the small group of proprietors. The governing body includes the three directors of Meadows Care, who, as the representatives of the school's proprietor, previously had direct strategic oversight of the school.
  - The new governing body has extended the range of skills available for governance, including, for example, the headteacher from another school.
  - The governing body meets regularly. It holds the headteacher and other leaders to account. However, the expectations of the governing body are still being shaped by the headteacher, for example in raising governors' awareness of the quality of education needed to properly cater for pupils.
  - Governors and the headteacher have introduced a rigorous system for managing the continuing performance of staff. This has not yet completed a full annual cycle. It is, however, an indication of the greater accountability now apparent across the school and has already led to better-planned training for teachers.

- Governors have a thorough understanding of the financial situation of the school. They were instrumental in requiring the headteacher to reduce the number of staff members and did not shy away from the difficult decisions which this brought.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding is given a very high priority in response to the circumstances of many pupils. Staff training is up to date and policies have recently been reviewed. There is a clear culture of safeguarding, for example in improved security within and around the school site. Safeguarding training for staff is regular and includes the necessary information to allow staff to understand and respond to the risks pupils may face, including those associated with child sexual exploitation and contact with people who hold extremist views.
- Leaders are aware of the requirements of the independent school standards and ensured that, by the end of the inspection, these were met in full, reflecting the good quality of education offered and leaders' attention to the wider needs of pupils. However, a small number of minor adjustments to policies and other documents and the installation of an outside light had to be completed during the inspection in order for the standards to be met.
- The Department for Education received a number of complaints about the school prior to this inspection. These concerned the quality of education offered and the challenges staff faced in the school. Inspectors did not find evidence to support the concerns raised. They found that the school offers effective education in an environment which values pupils and staff and their welfare.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- Teaching and learning are effective and allow pupils to make good academic progress and build up their social and other skills.
- Pupils work in classes of one or two, which allows them to receive high levels of support. This helps them to concentrate on their learning and to avoid poor behaviour.
- The quality of teaching has improved over time. There is now agreement about the common approaches and resources to be used in classrooms. Inspectors saw these being used in both the main school and the education rooms in the children's homes.
- Lessons are planned well. Teachers are expected to set out what pupils will learn during each lesson and share key questions and targets with pupils right from the start. This approach worked well in topics as diverse as GCSE English and the preparation of food for the Queen's birthday celebrations.
- In all teaching and learning seen by inspectors, the subject learning for the lesson was accompanied by thoughtful teaching and support to help pupils develop their wider skills and good behaviour.
- Teaching is planned to emphasise learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' writing is supported by the consistent use of the school's marking policy. Reading is encouraged across the school and in the children's homes, with pupils being allocated a budget to buy reading books. However, these are not always of an appropriate level of reading difficulty for the pupils. Children's home staff do not always use them as effectively as they could as part of homework activities.
- Teachers track pupils' learning and behaviour closely, recording key information using an electronic system at the end of each lesson. This information is then used to reward pupils when they have done well. In addition, it contributes to careful sharing of information about pupil's progress with children's home staff at the end of each day.
- When different teaching expertise or learning approaches are needed to develop pupils' skills and confidence, these are put in place. The small amount of alternative provision offered is well organised and contributes effectively to the learning of the pupils involved.
- Whenever possible, all pupils share in a weekly lesson involving pupils and staff from the school, and the therapy and care teams. An inspector saw a particularly effective example of this when small groups of pupils worked closely together to decide how to hold an egg as high up as possible. In doing this they were very successfully challenged to develop their perseverance and their communication and social skills.
- Assessment is thorough, starting with a six-week induction and assessment period as pupils join the school. Wherever appropriate, pupils are entered for external examinations in Year 11. This can sometimes present significant additional challenges, for example when pupils join the school part way through the year. Teachers ensure that pupils are helped to meet their aspirations and gain GCSE, functional skills or other qualifications.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have created a positive school community where pupils' success and welfare are seen as the most important aspects.
- The school is a safe place. Pupils recognise this and told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Teachers and other members of staff receive training to help them keep pupils safe. Leaders know about the risks which may affect pupils and others using the school facilities and are active in reducing these.
- When pupils attend alternative provision their work is carefully monitored to ensure that they are safe and successful.
- Teaching from school staff and visitors ensures pupils know about the risks they may face, for example about sexual exploitation and the misuse of drugs and alcohol.
- The help pupils receive to develop their wider skills through their education and work with therapists helps them understand and control their own behaviour more effectively.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of the school. The headteacher has introduced high standards for school uniform and pupils know that they are required to wear their uniform when at school. School staff have worked with children's home staff to ensure that pupils are ready for school. On rare occasions pupils arrive at school without proper uniform.
- Pupils respect each other, their teachers and other adults. They were courteous towards inspectors and willing to talk about their views of the school. They said that issues such as bullying or the use of homophobic or other derogatory language are rare and dealt with well by staff if they happen.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning are reflected in their respect for the main school building and the effort they normally put in to written work and other learning tasks.
- Pupils typically conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. This good behaviour is supported by the high staffing levels and members of staff's good knowledge of their needs.
- On occasion, there are instances of poor behaviour. Staff are frequently aware of the things that can trigger this poor behaviour and take steps to ensure that it does not develop. When it does, the school has clear strategies in response such as access to the therapists based in the same building as the school.
- Sometimes, because of their difficult behaviour, pupils are required to continue their education in the school's room in their care home rather than the main school building. When this happens a teacher follows the pupil to allow learning to continue. Such instances are followed up in restorative meetings which aim to help those involved understand what has gone wrong and how they can make amends.
- Full attendance registers are kept. If students refuse to attend school they are recorded as absent. Pupils generally enjoy being in school and recognise what it allows them to achieve. The attendance of some pupils is very high. Overall, average attendance is low when compared to that seen in many other schools. However, a small number of pupils find attending school very challenging. Attendance has increased over the last year, which reflects pupils' increasing commitment to the school.

## Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils make good progress as a result of the effective teaching and care they receive.
- The numbers of pupils are very small and learning is tailored to individual pupils' needs, which means that it is not possible to draw firm conclusions from data on pupils' achievements in the past. However, all Year 11 pupils in 2015 left the school with at least one recognised qualification and all went on to further education or training.
- Many pupils arrive at the school with low attainment due to gaps in their education and then stay for relatively short periods of time. This makes it harder for them to reach high levels of attainment by the time they leave.
- Pupils currently in the school typically make expected progress in English and mathematics from their generally low starting points. Pupils whose education has been more settled through a longer time in the school often make faster progress than this. Progress in other subjects is similar.
- Where pupils show a particular interest or talent, the school fosters these well. Intensive teaching

towards GCSE is offered to the most-able pupils to enable them to gain academic success and wider strategies are found to develop other skills, for example in arranging county-level coaching for pupils who are talented at sports.

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education as a result of their educational success and wider development. They receive individual advice and guidance about college courses or employment and receive a taught programme about preparation for working life. While careers education is in place from key stage 3, the programme offered to the youngest pupils does not provide sufficient depth or detail.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136275
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012779
<b>DfE registration number</b>	354/6202

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	15
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Meadows Care Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Niel Shelmerdine
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Shazia Sarwar-Azim
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£52,000 (or as determined to meet pupils' needs)
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 630022
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.meadowscare.co.uk/school">www.meadowscare.co.uk/school</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@meadowscare.co.uk">info@meadowscare.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27–28 June 2012

## Information about this school

- Meadows School is a registered independent school. It consists of a special day school taking pupils from a group of 19 children's homes. Almost all of the children's homes are located in and around the Oldham and Rochdale areas. The school and the children's homes are owned and operated by Meadows Care Ltd.
- 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 up to 43 pupils aged from 10 to 19. There are currently 15 pupils on roll. Roughly half have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan. All pupils are in the care of their local authority, which funds their places. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage, with a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The school has requested a change of registration with the Department for Education to change its age range to 11–16 and to reduce the number of pupils permitted. The school has not received confirmation regarding these changes. No post-16 learners are currently on roll.
- A small number of pupils attend part-time off-site courses run by an alternative provider, Agricultural Resource Centre.
- A new headteacher joined the school in March 2015.
- The school previously received a standard inspection in June 2012.

- The children's homes owned by Meadows Care are separately registered with Ofsted to provide care for young people. Their reports may be found on Ofsted's website under reference numbers: SC062475, SC063054, SC063197, SC064836, SC065189, SC065617, SC066072, SC066560, SC069198, SC361811, SC372117, SC382807, SC390577, SC411030, SC416464, SC442864, SC460593, SC462804 and SC477939.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in lessons conducted on the main school site and in education rooms in some of the children's homes.
- Inspectors toured the school's sites.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed throughout the school day.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and other members of staff. They met formally with a small group of pupils and had informal conversations with others. An inspector met two governors who are also members of the proprietorial body. A meeting was held with a social worker linked to a pupil and a therapist working for Meadows Care. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a consultant who provides school improvement support to the school.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. Questionnaires returned by 12 members of staff were considered.
- School policies and other documentation provided by the school were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards, and to provide other inspection evidence. Records including those relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour were also reviewed.
- The school's information on pupils' progress and attainment was considered.
- Inspectors examined work in pupils' exercise books.
- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out this inspection earlier in the cycle than previously planned as a result of complaints they had received about aspects of the school's work. The school received no notice of this inspection.

## Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ceri Evans	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Dawn Platt	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector

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