

Meadowside School

Pool Lane, Woodchurch, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 5LA

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of education that the school provides. The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous.
- Governors have not held leaders to account rigorously enough. They do not have a strategic overview of how well pupils are progressing. Consequently, they have been too slow to stem the decline in the school's performance.
- Leaders do not have an adequate overview of pupils' outcomes. They do not always know the impact that their work has on improving outcomes for pupils, including those who are eligible for additional funding and those who are on 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Pupils and students do not make good progress over time. The school's assessment information is overgenerous about how much progress pupils make.
- The quality of teaching across the school is too variable. In some lessons, learning is not well matched to pupils' ability. The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, and the least able pupils are set tasks that are too difficult.
- In some lessons, teachers do not give clear instructions about the work that they have set and do not check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson. As a result, some pupils do not make good progress.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence are very high in the school. Leaders and governors have only recently acted to address these issues. It is too soon to see whether these actions will have an impact on raising pupils' attendance.
- The school has not published all required information on its website including information about the pupil premium grant and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The programme and choice of subjects offered meet the diverse range of pupils' strengths and needs in the school.
- The new chair of governors has implemented processes to hold leaders to account. The new school improvement plan contains accountability measures, and a systematic process for challenging leaders to improve attendance is in place.
- Conduct in lessons and throughout the school is positive. Pupils' personal development and welfare is good, and pupils feel safe and happy in the school.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes focus on improving pupils' life skills and prepare pupils well for adulthood. Pupils have the opportunity for regular work experience placements in their local community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors have a secure understanding of the quality of education that the school is providing through rigorous and accurate self-evaluation that includes wider consultation with parents, carers pupils and staff
 - leaders and governors use effective self-evaluation to plan and implement appropriate actions to improve all aspects of the school’s work
 - leaders have adequate information about the progress that pupils are making and use this to take action across the school to improve outcomes for pupils
 - all required information is published on the school’s website
 - governors have a deep understanding of the progress that pupils in the school are making, including pupils on 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Ensure that teachers use their assessment of pupils’ prior learning to design learning activities that challenge the most able pupils and support the least able pupils.
- Improve pupils’ and students’ progress by ensuring that:
 - the assessment system accurately reflects the progress that pupils are making over time
 - all teachers give clear instructions and use resources effectively so that pupils know what is expected of them in lessons
 - all teachers and support staff allow pupils sufficient processing time in order to fully understand key concepts.
- Ensure that the actions that leaders have taken to reduce pupils’ high absence rates have an impact on raising attendance across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher's evaluation of the school is overgenerous and is not supported by a broad range of evidence. As a result, plans for school improvement are not based on an accurate understanding of the quality of education that the school provides. Improvement plans do not provide a sound basis for evaluating the impact of the actions that leaders take.
- Leaders do not draw on a broad range of information to support self-evaluation. There is an over-reliance on the school's own assessment information when making judgements about the quality of education in the school. This assessment information is not confirmed by other information sources such as visits to classrooms and a review of pupils' books.
- Leaders do not take account of the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff when considering the quality of education that the school provides.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is not good. Leaders have not taken sufficient actions to secure consistent improvements to the quality of teaching since they identified a decline in standards a year ago. Consequently, the quality of teaching varies considerably throughout the school, and pupils' learning and progress are of inconsistent quality.
- Leaders do not have a strategic overview of pupils' progress and outcomes for pupils, including those who are eligible for additional funding and those taking 16 to 19 study programmes. Pupils' outcomes are not good. Leaders have detailed information about the progress of individual pupils. However, this information is overgenerous.
- Leaders have recently introduced new systems for tracking pupils' attendance. These systems are being used well, but it is too early to determine whether they will have a sustained impact on improving pupils' attendance across the school.
- Leaders have created a caring school community. Pupils are happy in the school. They said that they feel safe and can explain how to keep themselves safe. Pupils said that the school 'feels like a family'. Parents feel positive about the school and reported that their children feel safe. One parent said that the school had 'wrapped its arm around' the pupils.
- Members of staff feel valued by leaders and value the opportunities for continuing their own professional development in areas that particularly interest them. This specialist training enables teachers to meet the specific needs of pupils.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that offers experiences to meet the diverse range of needs in the school. The curriculum offers a wide range of learning opportunities to pupils that prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. The curriculum is delivered in a flexible way, adapting to the learning strengths of pupils. It allows learning programmes to be individualised to meet pupils' specific needs.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum in key stage 4 and 16 to 19 study programmes focuses on developing life skills. Pupils and students learn about managing money, cooking for themselves and nurturing healthy relationships. Students

on 16 to 19 study programmes receive good advice and guidance about their options after they leave Meadowside School. Consequently, all pupils who left the school in 2017 continued in education or accessed appropriate specialist services.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported in a variety of ways. Pupils experience enrichment opportunities that help them to contribute to their local community in a positive and meaningful way. They also access experiences beyond their locality through educational visits and residential trips. The school's curriculum addresses important elements of pupils' moral and social development, and this forms the basis of the strong relationships evident throughout the school.
- Leaders promote British values explicitly in long-term curriculum plans. Pupils learn about the importance of equality and are encouraged to both express their views and listen to the views of others during lessons. Consequently, pupils are confident when speaking with adults and respectful of other people. The use of displays on equality, the school council, and initiatives such as the anti-bullying project called 'STOP' further reinforces this positive ethos.

Governance of the school

- The recently appointed chair of the governing body provides an honest and clear-sighted evaluation of the quality of governance. He has recognised that governors have not been rigorous enough in challenging school leaders. They have not held leaders to account stringently enough for all aspects of the school's performance. Therefore, he has ensured that recently developed plans to improve the school are specific and measurable.
- The chair of the governing body acknowledges that governors could have done more to challenge leaders regarding the high rates of absence and persistent absence. He has implemented a new process for ensuring that leaders regularly report pupils' absence rates to the governing body.
- Governors do not have a strategic overview of assessment information. They do not have enough information to challenge leaders effectively or to hold them to account for the quality of education in the school. The minutes of governing body meetings do not record sufficient challenge to leaders regarding the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governors have not systematically challenged leaders to ensure that additional funding is used well for disadvantaged pupils. Governors have not ensured that information about the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is published on the school's website.
- Governors demonstrate a commitment to the school through regular attendance at governing body meetings and regular and frequent visits to the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils said that they feel safe in the school. Parents reported that their children are happy to come to school and feel secure when they are in school.
- Members of staff have up-to-date training on safeguarding that includes training on

preventing radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and child protection. Staff are knowledgeable and know how to apply this training to the specific vulnerabilities of pupils in the school.

- Leaders have developed a culture of safeguarding based on a deep regard for pupils and a well-founded knowledge of the particular vulnerabilities that arise from their special educational needs (SEN). Members of staff are vigilant and know how to follow procedures correctly in order to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school is too variable. Evidence found in workbooks and presented to inspectors in an electronic format showed that the quality of teaching is not consistently good over time. Consequently, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils generally enjoy their lessons, and the majority of pupils are engaged in their learning. The strong relationships that exist in the school enable staff to encourage pupils to stay on task and develop pupils' confidence and resilience so that they are able to try new skills. As a result, pupils develop independence in their learning and are able to access new experiences in a secure and supportive environment. This prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- The school's attention to the professional development of members of staff has resulted in teachers and support staff having a broad range of skills. Staff are able to meet the specific needs of groups of pupils, including those pupils who are less able or who have more complex needs.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers have planned well and use assessment effectively. This planning enables teachers to employ a variety of teaching approaches in order to meet pupils' individual needs. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school.
- Pupils who have more complex needs are supported well in their learning. A wide range of communication approaches are employed to develop pupils' understanding. Members of staff allow these pupils sufficient time to process information and respond to it. Careful attention has been given to placing pupils in groups which meet their needs.
- Where support staff are deployed effectively, they support pupils' learning and progress well. They offer subtle support to pupils and encourage independence in learning through the use of skilled questioning. They ensure that pupils remain focused on tasks and address any incidents of challenging behaviour with skill and empathy.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information effectively in order to plan well for learning and progress. Consequently, pupils are set tasks that do not challenge them enough or are given work that is too difficult for them. This prevents pupils from making good progress either because they are not stretched sufficiently or because they are over-reliant on adult support to complete tasks.
- Teachers' instructions are not always clear to pupils and, consequently, pupils do not understand what is required of them. In these situations, pupils are not able to

complete the tasks, and learning time is wasted, as pupils need to repeat their work. This hinders pupils' progress.

- Some teachers do not regularly check pupils' understanding to address their misconceptions. Consequently, learning is not secure, as pupils do not understand key concepts being studied. Resources to support pupils' understanding are not used well enough.
- At times, teachers do not give pupils enough time to process information and respond to questions. In these situations, teachers and support staff intervene and provide answers to questions or ideas for discussion too quickly. This limits pupils' spontaneity and restricts the opportunity for independent learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school works in collaboration with health colleagues to provide an on-site nursing service every day. A monthly consultant appointment supports pupils' welfare. This enables pupils to attend their appointments in a familiar environment and without having to take time out of school.
- Pupils' personal development focuses on developing their independence in all aspects of their lives. For some pupils, this entails actively contributing to their local community, while for others it involves seeking appropriate self-regulating sensory experiences. The school's skill in developing independence across this broad spectrum of need is a strength.
- The school curriculum focuses on developing relationships in all aspects of life. Pupils are taught how to identify healthy relationships and avoid unhealthy or unsafe relationships. They understand how to stay safe and how to ask for help. Pupils understand how to prevent bullying and, as a consequence, they reported that there is no bullying in the school.
- Pupils are friendly and warm towards each other in lessons and around the school. They support one another's efforts in lessons and listen respectfully to each other's ideas. Pupils socialise appropriately during breaktimes and enjoy each other's company. Pupils said that seeing their friends is one of the best things about the school.
- Leaders hold an annual skills week to inform pupils about possible careers. This provides them with an experience of various roles and jobs, including animal care, sports and leisure, and catering. Pupils are able to describe the purpose of the skills week and its impact on their learning in a positive way.
- Pupils are generally well prepared for the next stage of their lives in modern Britain. They regularly access their local community and enjoy their residential visits. There are regular opportunities for work experience placements for pupils studying on 16 to 19 study programmes. These include working at a local farm, a café and a local high school.
- Leaders have improved the qualifications framework by making it more flexible in order

to meet the diverse range of needs in the school. The framework offers a broad range of qualifications that are tailored to the specific needs of pupils and accredits their learning in key areas, such as life skills and careers education. This diverse range of qualifications supports pupils' and students' transition into the next phase of their lives.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence are high. Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to address this, and recent changes to the systems for tracking pupils' attendance are not embedded. Therefore, the impact of these actions on a sustained improvement in attendance cannot be assumed.
- The conduct of pupils throughout the school is appropriate. During the inspection, there were very few examples of disruptive or challenging behaviour, and these episodes were dealt with appropriately. Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They are comfortable talking with adults, and strong relationships based on mutual respect and valuing others permeate the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- The assessment information provided by the school is generally positive. However, it is inaccurate. Inspectors could not find enough evidence of progress over time in pupils' workbooks to confirm the school's information. Furthermore, inspection evidence showed that there was variability in the progress that pupils make.
- Systems for collating and tracking pupils' progress do not provide the school with an adequate overview of pupils' progress over time. Subject leaders have detailed information on each pupil's progress, and tracking information is generated for their analysis at an individual pupil level. However, this information is not used effectively by leaders and governors to support actions to improve outcomes for pupils across the school.
- The progress made by the most able and the least able pupils is not consistently good. Evidence in pupils' workbooks and observations of teaching and learning demonstrated that the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, while the least able pupils are sometimes over-challenged.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently good progress over time. Evidence in the work books of the most able disadvantaged pupils showed that they are not being routinely challenged.
- There is a variety of qualifications available to pupils that reflect the diverse range of needs in the school. The least able pupils complete accredited courses leading to nationally recognised awards. The most able pupils are offered GCSE courses at the school and in conjunction with a local high school. All pupils who left the school in July 2017 received some form of accredited award.
- The school has reviewed its qualification framework and implemented a new framework during this academic year. This provides a broader range of courses, particularly for the most able pupils, which lead to qualifications that will support their

transition into adult life.

- Pupils move on to a variety of appropriate destinations after they leave Meadowside School. Some pupils attend the local further education provider, while others move onto highly specialised provision which meets their specific complex needs. All pupils who left the school in July 2017 moved onto further education or specialist provision.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Safeguarding is effective for students on 16 to 19 study programmes. Students benefit from the strong safeguarding culture of the school. They said that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The personal development and welfare of students on 16 to 19 study programmes is good. There is a long-term plan for the delivery of the curriculum, which focuses on the development of life skills and a well-structured programme for the delivery of careers education. The school works closely with the careers service in order to provide students with impartial information and experience of a range of jobs.
- The conduct of students on 16 to 19 study programmes is appropriate. There are few incidents of challenging behaviour reported by the school. Examples of staff skilfully supporting students who have complex sensory needs were seen by the inspection team.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence are high for pupils studying on 16 to 19 study programmes.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is well supported. Students access a range of experiences that enable them to express themselves with confidence about a variety of issues. British values are explicitly incorporated into the planning of the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Leadership is not fully effective, as leaders do not have an accurate view of the quality of education for students on 16 to 19 study programmes. Leaders' evaluation is not based on a wide range of information and does not include the views of pupils, parents and staff.
- Assessment information presented by the school for students currently studying on 16 to 19 study programmes is positive. However, scrutiny of a range of work from students indicates that pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are variable.
- All students studying on 16 to 19 study programmes have the opportunity to access work experience placements. These include working at a local farm, working in a café and working as a physical education technician in a local high school. Students said that they enjoy their work placements and parents value this aspect of the school's work in promoting independence and supporting students' transition into adult life.
- All of the leavers in 2017 achieved some form of accredited award or qualification. Similarly, all leavers in 2017 continued into further education or accessed specialist support services to meet their complex needs. The school has recently implemented a qualifications framework that offers students a wide range of appropriate qualifications to support their transition into the next phase of their lives.

School details

Unique reference number	105133
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10048961

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryan Douglas-Dala
Headteacher	Paula Wareing
Telephone number	01516 787711
Website	www.meadowsidesschool.com
Email address	schooloffice2@meadowsideschool.com
Date of previous inspection	15 February 2018

Information about this school

- Meadowside School caters for a broad range of SEN and disabilities including severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium funding, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, examination and assessment results and links to the school and college performance tables service.
- The school received a Section 8 inspection in February 2018. A number of priorities for improvement were identified.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all key stages including the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Inspectors undertook joint lesson observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, school leaders, governors, pupils, students, parents and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with the local authority's leader for SEN and/or disability and the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' and students' work and examined a range of policies and protocols created by the school, including the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Martin Hanbury, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Bather

Ofsted Inspector

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