

Inspection of a good school: Meadowbrook College

Raymund Road, Old Marston, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX3 0PG

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

Meadowbrook College continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Jacqui West. This school is part of the Radcliffe Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, also Jacqui West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Hayden Davies.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a calm and purposeful environment where every pupil is valued and respected. Relationships are warm and nurturing. When pupils join the school, their confidence and self-esteem are typically at a low ebb. The school gives them a fresh start to their education. Pupils develop renewed hope and see a brighter future ahead of them. They are helped to overcome a fear of failure. Some describe their experiences at the school as life-changing.

Pupils are happy here and feel that staff listen to them and understand their needs. During breakfast time, staff check in on pupils and help to get the day off to a positive start. Pupils know and appreciate the school's expectations for them to be 'ready, respectful and safe'. Staff model kindness and patience and successfully diffuse any tensions. High staff ratios and effective support help pupils to regulate their emotions and behaviour, including during times of crisis.

The school has high expectations for pupils. Everyone is determined to help them succeed and break the cycle of their former disengagement with education. Pupils achieve well here. They are well prepared for their return to mainstream education or their chosen career pathways through further education or employment.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Strong transition processes enable leaders and staff to have an incisive understanding of pupils' needs. Staff work with the commissioning schools and parents, therapists and health professionals to plan what individual pupils need. This often begins with a carefully

considered induction programme to help pupils overcome the significant milestone of re-engaging with education.

Regular assessments and reviews enable staff to adapt support as pupils make progress and their needs change. Staff have considerable expertise in their specialist subjects. They carefully gauge when pupils are ready to move on and when they need to step back because of pupils' emotional well-being. Staff are invested in the school and are committed to making a positive difference to the lives of pupils. They feel well supported by leaders, who care about their well-being. Trustees are knowledgeable and have good systems in place to maintain oversight of the school.

The school offers a wide and varied curriculum. In key stage 4, this is increasingly aligned to qualification pathways and pupils' aspirations. Priority is given to ensuring that pupils leave the school with a functional skills qualification or GCSE in English and mathematics. Many pupils achieve other academic, vocational and technical accreditations. Pupils excel in art and photography.

Schemes of learning provide a coherent road map through the curriculum content in many subjects. However, in a few areas of the primary curriculum, content is not identified as precisely. This means that staff do not have enough guidance about what new knowledge pupils need to learn and when. There are also some inconsistencies in the school's approach and support for pupils at an early stage of learning to read. This means that these pupils are not developing their reading knowledge or confidence as well as they could. Nonetheless, the school promotes the enjoyment of reading and ensures that pupils encounter a range of texts and genres.

The school works hard to understand and address the root cause of any attendance issues. Strong relationships and a sense of belonging increase pupils' desire to be in school. Over time, their attendance improves considerably, especially when comparing pupils' attendance rates prior to joining Meadowbrook.

The school gives priority to pupils' social and moral development and issues related to their vulnerabilities. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships and consent. They are taught to understand risky behaviours and the moral, social and legal implications of lifestyle decisions, including inappropriate use of social media. The school works effectively to broaden pupils' horizons through an extensive range of enrichment activities. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive careers programme, including individual guidance. Staff work tirelessly to remove barriers so that pupils can confidently take the next steps in their chosen pathway.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that there is a fully consistent approach to reading for pupils at an early stage of learning to read. This means that pupils are not developing their reading knowledge as well as they could. The school should implement its plans to introduce a more consistent programme for early reading, including making sure that staff have the expertise and knowledge they need to deliver the programme effectively. The trust needs to ensure that reading materials are suitably aligned to the school's new programme.
- In a few areas of learning, the school's curriculum for the very small number of pupils in the primary years is still being refined. Some of the small steps towards the school's curriculum goals are not precise enough. This means that staff do not have enough guidance about the step-by-step knowledge they need to teach to enable pupils to progress through the curriculum. The school needs to refine the curriculum for younger pupils to provide greater clarity about the content and sequencing of knowledge in the foundation subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Meadowbrook College, to be good in May 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141727
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10256551
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Hayden Davies
CEO of the trust	Jacqui West
Headteacher	Jacqui West
Website	www.meadowbrook.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded from a mainstream school, are at risk of exclusion, or are finding it difficult to fully access mainstream education. Provision at the school includes full-time and part-time as well as short-term programmes. The school also provides outreach support to schools in Oxfordshire.
- The school is located in four sites in Oxfordshire. The main campus is located in Old Marston, Oxford. The other sites are located in Abingdon, Kidlington and Banbury.
- Currently, there are very few key stage 1 or key stage 2 pupils at the school. The majority of pupils are in key stage 4. Most pupils are dual registered with the schools that have commissioned alternative provision at Meadowbrook.
- The current headteacher took up post as acting headteacher in April 2022. She was subsequently appointed as the substantive headteacher.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider. Five pupils currently make use of this provision and a small number of pupils receive education at alternative sites.

- Most pupils have special educational needs related to their social, emotional and mental health needs. Approximately a quarter of pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school is part of the Radcliffe Academy Trust. It is currently the only school in this trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including reading, mathematics and art. For each subject, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with three members of the board of trustees, including the chair.
- Inspectors held telephone discussions with two representatives of the local authority who are responsible for the commissioning of alternative provision, and the local authority designated officer. An inspector held telephone discussions with leaders from three of the schools that have commissioned places for pupils at Meadowbrook.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences at school and took account of their responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. They also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through their responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through their written free-text responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector also held telephone discussions with two parents.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Shazia Akram

His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Regan

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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