

Inspection of Meadowfield School

Swanstree Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4NL

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils build positive relationships with staff. This helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils are happy in school. This is evident in the warm greetings they give staff in the morning and their positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have trusted adults they know will address any concerns they have. Staff ensure that pupils behave well. They give them support and strategies to manage their emotions effectively.

Pupils receive a rich range of support for their needs. Skilled therapy staff ensure that pupils have the help they need to access the curriculum. This includes well-targeted interventions for speech and language development. The well-being team work closely with those pupils who need additional help to manage their behaviour. They match this support precisely to pupils' needs. This improves pupils' resilience and confidence over time.

Pupils do make progress against their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching and lack of clarity in what pupils should learn in some subjects. As a result, pupils do not always learn the skills and knowledge they need. Staff want all pupils to achieve well but some of the tasks that older pupils, including those in sixth form, complete lack ambition. This means some pupils are not well prepared for their next steps.

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

The school has been through a period of significant change. This includes instability in leadership in sixth form and a rapid increase in pupil numbers. The school now has stable leadership. It also has a comprehensive training offer to ensure that staff have the knowledge they need to undertake their work. However, the school does not monitor the impact of this training closely enough in some areas. This means that some staff are not consistent in the way they communicate with pupils. The school has begun to address this.

The school has designed a broad curriculum with ambition for pupils to learn crucial skills and knowledge. This is developed further in some phases of the school, such as early years, where staff have identified precisely what they want pupils to learn. However, the sequence of learning in some subjects, means that it is not always clear how pupils will build on their skills over time. In other subjects, teaching does not consistently match the intended learning. This means that pupils do not learn all the curriculum content that they should.

Teachers' subject knowledge varies. Many have strong understanding of the curriculum and explain learning clearly. However, some teaching does not provide pupils with the knowledge they need to be successful. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school does not have the information it needs to evaluate the quality of the provision. This means they cannot identify priorities for improvement precisely enough.

The checks on pupils' understanding are generally effective. Staff have become increasingly confident in using these checks to address any gaps in learning. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school identifies any barriers to learning clearly. Staff use this knowledge to plan personalised provision to meet pupils' complex needs. However, the sequence of learning in some subjects is not always clear enough. Therefore, some individual pupils' next steps in learning are not identified and used to support them to make the progress they could.

Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils in the early stages of reading have the support they need to become confident readers. Staff track pupils' knowledge of phonics carefully. This helps them to identify pupils who fall behind precisely. Staff design appropriate activities that help pupils catch up. Pupils' love for reading starts in the early years, where children enjoy a rich range of stories and rhymes. Older pupils enjoy choosing books at the local library.

Children in early years get off to a strong start. They learn the skills and knowledge they need to be well prepared for their next steps. However, this is not consistent in some other areas of provision. Consequently, some pupils' learning, in these areas, does not build effectively over time.

The school does ensure that students in sixth form have a range of experiences that prepare them appropriately for adulthood. For example, they enjoy a range of well-planned work experience opportunities. However, the qualifications the school offer are not ambitious enough.

Pupils enjoy learning. This is evident in the purposeful atmosphere in the school. Pupils work hard and concentrate well. They show high levels of care and courtesy. Pupils' love for school is also clear in their frequent attendance. The school's checks on pupil absence are precise. This helps to identify swiftly those pupils who need help to attend well. Pupils' attendance improves as a result.

The school prioritises the personal development of pupils. They have ample opportunities to develop their skills and talents. This includes a range of clubs and other opportunities, such as learning a musical instrument. Pupils develop their sporting and social skills by representing the school in a range of sports. They also work together to perform at the school's 'Meadowsbury' festival. Pupils understand the importance of respect and have positive attitudes to diversity.

Staff are proud of their work. They are positive about the support and training they receive and how leaders consider their workload. Governors are knowledgeable and offer support and challenge in equal measure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The sequence of learning is not clear enough in a small number of subjects. In some other subjects, teachers do not follow the curriculum precisely enough. As a result, pupils do not build on their learning over time effectively. The school must ensure that the curriculum is sequenced to build on prior learning effectively and followed precisely in all subjects.
- The school has not ensured that teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum consistently well. Some teachers are also not consistent in their use of communication strategies. As a result, at times, pupils are not clear on what they need to learn to be successful. The school must ensure that teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum consistently well.
- The qualifications that pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form work towards lack ambition. They do not build on pupils' prior learning and achievement effectively. As a result, these pupils do not necessarily achieve qualifications that support their interests and aspirations. The school must ensure that the qualifications pupils take build on prior learning and provide them with the knowledge and skills that they need to access a wide range of next steps.
- The school does not ensure that it has the knowledge it needs to be able to evaluate the impact of the curriculum and staff practice accurately. As a result, leaders do not always have the knowledge they need to drive improvement well enough. The school must ensure that they have effective processes that allow them to clearly identify areas for development in the school and be clear in the role staff must play in this.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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	134783
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10379841
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roberta Kane
Principal	Angela Howe
Website	www.meadowfield.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 April 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils between the ages of 3 and 19 years, who have speech, language and communication difficulty, autism, physical disability, moderate learning difficulty, severe learning difficulty and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has nursery provision on site, which offers observation and assessment.
- The school has a number of satellite sites co-located on the premises of mainstream schools. These include primary and secondary provision.
- The school manages and provides an outreach specialist teaching and learning service for the local authority. This includes supporting teachers in other schools. A training

programme is also offered to teachers, covering many aspects related to special education.

- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, physical education, creative arts and personal, social and health education. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection. Inspectors also met with representative groups of pupils.
- 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.

Inspection team

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