



Meadowgate School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110949
LEA CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278556
Inspection dates 9 February 2006 to 10 February 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Sue Aldridge LI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Meadowgate Lane
School category	Community special		PE13 2JH
Age range of pupils	3 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01945461836
Number on roll	116	Fax number	01945589967
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Malcolm Blackwell
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Neil Sears

Age group 3 to 16	Inspection dates 9 February 2006 - 10 February 2006	Inspection number 278556
-----------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Of the 116 pupils currently on roll, there are twice as many boys as girls. All pupils have statements of special educational need, and their attainment on entry is low. Almost a third of pupils have severe learning difficulties, a quarter have autism, and a fifth have moderate learning difficulties. Roughly a sixth have profound and multiple learning difficulties, and there are nine pupils with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties; a very small number have visual impairment. Most pupils are White British; there is a very small number of Asian origin. Two pupils are from traveller families, and one pupil is in the care of the local authority. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The school takes pupils from a wide area. The school has links with a number of mainstream schools and colleges. Half of the pupils go into mainstream classes to learn alongside their peers and 24 mainstream pupils have some of their lessons at Meadowgate. The school also provides a base for the Butterfly team, a multi-disciplinary group that provides services to pupils with learning disabilities. The headteacher retired last term. During the inspection the deputy headteacher was acting as headteacher. Since the last inspection, the school has been a Beacon School and has received a number of awards in recognition of its work. It is affiliated to the Specialist Schools Trust and is pursuing specialist status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Meadowgate is a good school. Children in the Early Years class (Foundation Stage and Year 1) get an excellent start to their education. Other pupils flourish in the school's positive atmosphere and achieve very well because teaching and learning are good and there is outstanding support for them. There are very high standards of care and welfare. Pupils' personal development is outstanding, and they are very well prepared for leaving school, even though they do not reach the academic standards expected of their ages. Meadowgate's greatest asset is a highly skilled and dedicated staff team who work exceptionally well together. Parental satisfaction is very high. The school is very well led and managed, and provides good value for money. The school certainly has the capacity to be outstanding, which is how it sees itself. At present, the taught time in Years 10 and 11 is low, and this particularly affects the amount of time allocated to science teaching. Self-evaluation is well developed. Each year the school calculates the percentage of individual education plan (IEP) targets achieved by each pupil. However, not all targets are themselves measurable, making it impossible to know whether all have been achieved. Teachers record a wealth of information about pupils' activities including excellent individual photographic 'year books' for parents, but these are not annotated well enough to provide clear evidence of pupils' achievements. Although there were no key issues at the last inspection, there has been very good improvement since then. In particular, the school has developed an effective inclusion team that is valued by schools and parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the taught time in Years 10 and 11, and time allocations for secondary science.
- Increase annotation of photographic records to provide more evidence of pupils' achievements.
- Ensure that IEP targets are always measurable.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although pupils do not achieve the levels expected for their age, this is a result of the nature and extent of their learning difficulties. Pupils make very good progress, and their parents are delighted with this. Last year, 88% of pupils achieved 80% or more of the challenging targets set in their IEPs, and 95% achieved three quarters or more. This success by individuals has enabled the school to achieve the whole-school targets it has set itself for the last academic year. The school submits its assessment information to a national project that enables it to compare its results with a large number of similar schools nationally. This shows that pupils at Meadowgate progress very well in English, particularly in writing, and in mathematics and personal and social development. Progress in science is satisfactory. The school's records show an improvement in pupils' achievements since a subject specialist was appointed. However, the low time allocation for secondary lessons prevents pupils from making the same progress as they do in other subjects, despite generally good and sometimes

outstanding teaching. The results of accredited courses show an improvement over the past three years. For instance, pupils achieved 33 National Skills Profile Level 1 modules in 2004 and 180 in 2005. There was a similar rise in Level 3 modules from 156 to 161. Pupils of all abilities leave with suitable accreditation, including a few who achieve GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) art and design passes. Analysis shows that all groups of pupils achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They participate in school life with great enthusiasm and show huge enjoyment of the range of activities provided. They particularly appreciate the wide range of sporting opportunities and say that residential experiences are 'perfect'. Attendance is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Parents are often surprised by the gains made. Even the youngest ones develop a sense of responsibility when they plant and care for vegetables. The leavers competently organised a Valentine's disco during the inspection, and they made sure that the audio equipment had been electrically tested so that it was safe. Older pupils know which foods are necessary for a healthy diet, and that too much fat and salt should be avoided. Pupils are enthusiastic fund raisers, and support local and national charities. As they progress through the school their self-confidence and self-esteem grow. They are not afraid to speak their minds, and will persevere even when speaking is difficult. The rich curriculum gives pupils a thorough understanding of the many different cultures and customs in modern Britain. They are exceptionally well prepared for their lives as young adults. Residential experiences widen pupils' horizons and increase their independence skills, and through an excellent range of enterprise activities older pupils sell a range of high quality products and services. Employers give pupils good reports, and work experience has led to a few being offered Saturday jobs. Most pupils go on to further education courses when they leave, and have a clear idea of what they need to study to improve their life chances.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Outstanding teaching in the Early Years class is characterised by high quality planning and preparation, use of appealing resources, animated teaching, and very high expectations. Children are exceptionally attentive and responsive during lessons. Across the school, teaching is good. All staff contribute to the very good quality of pupils' learning. They are very well trained and work most effectively together in lessons. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent, and so pupils are keen to do well. Generous staffing levels ensure that pupils are well involved in the appealing activities provided. Staff use a good range of approaches to take account of pupils' different needs. For instance, schedules are used for pupils with autism; signing,

symbols and real objects are used widely to support understanding, and sensory approaches are effective in securing responses from pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Assessment is good. Recent training in assessing pupils' learning is well reflected in the practice of most staff. Learning outcomes are shared with pupils, and reviewed at a suitable point during the lesson. For those with complex difficulties, instant feedback is given; a review at the end of each lesson draws all pupils together and celebrates achievement. Recording is carried out well, and good use is made of digital photography. However, summary record books do not always have sufficient evidence of achievement, and individual sheets in year books are not fully annotated with a day's date, level, and an indication of whether there was any support provided.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for children in the Early Years class is exceptionally good. All areas of learning are included, staff are highly skilled, and pupils have access to all the facilities that would be expected as well as the use of specialist rooms. A particular strength is a week's residential that enriches their experiences. Across Years 2 to 11, careful thought has been given to groupings and pupils' needs. Good quality planning ensures that pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. There is a suitable emphasis on literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education. The school has enthusiastically embraced recent initiatives, such as work-related learning, including vocational courses, and increased flexibility for Years 10 and 11. The curriculum meets all broad requirements and is relevant. However, taught time in Years 10 and 11 is only 23 hours each week. This restricts breadth within subjects at this stage. The low time allocated to science in the secondary school means that the subject cannot be taught to the depth needed for pupils to obtain external accreditation. The curriculum for pupils over 16 is good. Great breadth is maintained at this stage, and experiences prepare pupils most successfully for the next step in their education. Enrichment of the curriculum is excellent. There are many visits and visitors, a wide range of extra-curricular activities and a planned programme of residential experiences that become more challenging as pupils progress through the school. This, the ethos of the school, and the high quality provision for personal, social and health education, assure pupils' excellent personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils say that the school is 'safe as houses', and they know who to go to if they need help. They have a voice through their school council, which has recently been established. Parents have absolute confidence that their children will be safeguarded, cared for and valued. The arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare, health, safety and continued support are excellent. These include secure arrangements for child protection, children in public care, and the reviews of pupils' statements. Highly trained staff ensure that pupils with particular needs are given the appropriate care. There are well documented and understood emergency procedures for pupils with life

threatening conditions. Risk assessments are carried out carefully, and action taken to ensure that pupils are not vulnerable. Excellent links with external services, as well as the multi-disciplinary team based at the school, ensure that pupils have all the sources of support that they need. Key staff have responsibility for groups that are vulnerable, and teamwork is most effective. For instance, the nurse has a well developed role in supporting pupils with behaviour difficulties, and teaching pupils how to be healthy and safe. She also supports parents, and they appreciate this very much. The inclusion team, provides much appreciated support for pupils from Meadowgate who go into mainstream schools, and for pupils from mainstream schools who have some of their lessons at Meadowgate. Evaluations show that there are important social benefits from these links, particularly in pupils' self-confidence, general well-being and formation of friendships.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher and senior management team provide good leadership. There is a clear vision for the school's future development, and a strong focus on improvement. Parental partnership is particularly well developed. Almost half of the parents returned questionnaires and not one had a criticism of the school. Parents feel that they are listened to. Many wrote of pleasing features, such as approachable staff and good communication with parents; several said that their expectations of their children had been exceeded. Effective teamwork is the hallmark of this school. The well trained workforce share a common purpose, are mutually supportive and display great trust and confidence in one another. This contributes to the positive ethos in the school and to its smooth running. Staff are prepared to try initiatives to test their benefits to pupils. There are very good opportunities for staff to develop their skills, which are used to good effect; all those with managerial responsibilities discharge them well. Self-evaluation involves all those that it should and works well. Feedback is carefully analysed and areas for further improvement identified. The school's development plan is well constructed, carefully monitored and supports improvement well. Governance is good. Governors have a range of pertinent skills and experience, and they are most supportive. For instance, they have funded an additional day for the nurse. They are often in school and know staff well. They have suitable systems for holding the school to account, which they do well.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school, especially those who talked to me about school life. A special thanks to the leavers for the lavender bag. I came to the school to see how well you are all getting on and whether there are any things that could be done better. These are the main things that are going well. - You work hard in lessons and make very good progress. - You really enjoy school and join in all activities. - Your behaviour is excellent. - There is some excellent teamwork, especially in the enterprise sessions. - The staff are doing a very good job. - The staff work together very well and with other people to make sure that you have all the help you need. - Parents are very pleased with the school. These are the things that need to be improved. - You need more time for lessons in Years 10 and 11, and for secondary science. - There needs to be more written information to go with the photographs in your year books. - Staff should be able to tell when you have reached your personal targets. I hope that you will all keep up the good work. With best wishes