

Meadowside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105133
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	287133
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	65
6th form	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Lannon
Headteacher	Ms L Kane
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Pool Lane Woodchurch Wirral Merseyside CH49 5LA
Telephone number	0151 6787711
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school caters for students with a wide and complex range of special educational needs. The number with severe learning and very complex learning needs has risen sharply since the last inspection. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is significantly higher than the national average. Few students are from minority ethnic family backgrounds. None is from a family where English is not the spoken language. Very few students are in public care. The school is part of the local authority's review of its provision for students with special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has outstanding features, but there are a few areas in need of development. Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements, particularly in how parents view the school. The vast majority of parents are now delighted with the progress their children make. The provision for students with severe and very complex learning difficulties is significantly improved. An innovative and creative senior management team structure implemented by the headteacher, and well supported by the governing body, has resulted in the development of an outstandingly rich, vibrant and relevant curriculum in the main school which promotes students' life skills exceptionally well. The curriculum is also good in the sixth form, but limited space impedes the school in shaping the accommodation in the way in which it would like to further develop students' independence. Significant strides have been made in tracking students' progress. Overall, tracking systems, especially those for monitoring the behaviour and checking on the progress of students towards their individual targets, are good. However, the impact of middle managers' involvement in this is inconsistent. Not all subject leaders keep a close enough eye on teaching and learning in their subjects. Consequently, although teaching is good, not all teachers use information about students' progress consistently to identify the next learning steps to help them improve.

Achievement is good, particularly in students' development of important life skills and their ability to communicate their needs. Students are equipped to embrace a healthy lifestyle, adopt safe practices and develop important life skills such as weighing ingredients when cooking and how to use money for shopping. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is their care. Students greatly enjoy school and have an overwhelmingly positive attitude to learning. This is a self-critical school and the evaluation of how well it is doing is robust. Data gathered from this evaluation are used well to drive further improvements and enhance the school's effectiveness. The school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision is good. The curriculum is good and well accredited. It supports students' development of life skills well, as they learn to shop, prepare and cook food, and travel independently. Achievement and teaching are good. Leadership and management are effective, under the remit of the deputy headteacher. Arrangements for transition are thorough, and the school could not do more in preparing parents and their children for this move.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information consistently to plan specific learning outcomes for students in every lesson.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they check on the quality of learning and students' progress in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Throughout the school, students make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is good in these subjects, but standards are significantly below the national average because of students learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A few more able students, supported in specific subjects in the local high school, attain creditable pass grades in the GCSE examinations. Progress in communication and the development of independence skills is outstanding. For some students this is shown by the turn of the head in response to a question. Others express their concerns and needs using carefully selected words. For students with the most complex needs, developments in independent feeding, toileting, dressing and mobility builds their confidence and delights their parents. A typical comment from parents is that, 'My daughter made a bacon sandwich and washed up afterwards, I thought that would never happen.' Similarly, 'My daughter goes out with her friends, in her wheelchair, and even enjoys doing 'speedies' with them.' Achievement is particularly good in physical education, and design and technology because planning in these subjects ensures that all students are fully included and given opportunities to excel. By the time they leave at the end of the sixth form, the vast majority of students shop with real money, prepare a wholesome snack, sew for a purpose and travel independently. Those with the most complex needs experience these life skills and so make small steps of progress. When there is a breakthrough for an individual student it brings delight to all involved in the community of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They say, 'We love making stuff out of clay and PE is great.' Behaviour is good. A school council member said, 'We don't tolerate bullying in this school'. Some students have very challenging behaviour associated with their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Skilfully managed by staff, the vast majority of these students gain confidence and so their behaviour improves. Serious incidents have decreased significantly this year. Attendance, considering the serious medical needs of a number of students, is good. The school successfully equips students to develop a healthy lifestyle and adopt safe practices. Promotion of emotional health is a significant strength. Through exciting enterprise projects, students learn to handle money. A vibrant school council ensures students are actively involved in improving school life. They are proud of their achievement in shifting the culture of the tuck shop. Healthy snacks are now sold to raise school funds and fizzy drinks are frowned upon. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The sensory garden is used to good effect to fire students' imagination. Students' awareness of cultural diversity is developed exceptionally well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers know students' individual needs and plan activities to ensure that they are met. Approaches to teaching usually emphasise practical activities which develop life skills. Access to switches and modified equipment removes barriers to learning for students. Learning is fun and has a real purpose. A careers lesson helped students apply mathematical skills when they worked out how much pay would be docked from their wages if they turned in late for work. Students are supported with signing and skilful questioning is used to challenge them and take them further with their learning. Teaching assistants are effective but, occasionally, they jump in with support too quickly. On these occasions students are not given sufficient time to solve problems for themselves. Teachers are getting better at using assessment on a lesson by lesson basis to set specific learning outcomes for each student to move them on in their learning, but this is not yet consistent across all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Flexibly planned, the curriculum is tailored to the needs of the individual. A sensory programme is used to stimulate and motivate students with the most complex needs. For the remainder of students, the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education have been imaginatively modified to ensure relevance. Statutory requirements are met. Students' numeracy and communication skills are developed through a cross-curricular model. The focus on developing students' life skills is greatly appreciated by parents. The work related programme is good. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is outstanding. Advice on substance misuse and sex education is sensitively provided. There is a suitable range of accredited courses for students which give credibility to the curriculum they follow. The wide range of exciting enrichment activities promotes enjoyment and fun in learning. All activities are designed to equip students with the skills they require to cope with adult life. The magical ingredient is the inclusive nature of every planned activity, evidenced by the swirling movement of students in wheelchairs during the line dance club. The Year 7 and leavers' residential visits contribute successfully to enhancing students' independence, confidence and self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Education staff and health professionals work together to provide high quality care for each student. They facilitate correct positioning and adapt culinary utensils to improve independent feeding, increase students' confidence in independent movement by improving their muscle strength and, through modifications to keyboards, ensure barriers to accessing computers are removed. In addition, they service the needs of some students from other mainstream schools in the area. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the care their children receive. Risk

assessments are thorough. Child protection procedures are robust. Students say they feel safe. Induction and transition arrangements are effective. Tracking of pupils' life skills and improvements in their behaviour is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has effectively brought about improvements which have benefited the students. With the full support of the governing body she has put in place an innovative senior management structure which has improved the curriculum. However, the role of middle managers is not sufficiently developed. Senior managers spend too much time on day-to-day management rather than focusing on the strategic picture. The impact of the subject leaders is not consistent across the school. Relationships amongst staff are good and this is a self-critical school. Good systems are in place to keep a check on how well it is performing. Information from the rigorous monitoring is used well in order to plan. The priorities on the school improvement plan sharply focus on raising the achievement of students.

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Annex A

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
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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Meadowside School, Woodchurch, CH49 5LA

Thank you so much for the lovely welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I greatly enjoyed meeting the school council. The views you shared with me have left an impression on me of just how wonderfully you care for and support each other.

I think your school is good with some excellent things going on. You achieve well, particularly in making your needs known and in doing things by yourselves. You are taught well and find your learning challenging and fun. Your behaviour is good and the subjects you study help you develop very important skills that will equip you to live as independent young adults. You are well cared for.

There are just a few things that will make your school an even better place. I have asked Ms Kane and her staff to make sure that they always plan very small and important skills for you to achieve in every lesson. This will support your teachers in helping you to learn even better. I have also asked that the teachers who are in charge of subjects help the other teachers so that they are more effective in the way they help you.

You are such lovely and hard working young people. It was a joy to meet you. Please continue to work hard and I wish you all well for the future.