



# The Meadows Community School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 112958  
**Local Authority** DERBYSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 289473  
**Inspection dates** 17–18 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** David Simpson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	High Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		Old Whittington, Old Whittington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 9LG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01246 450825
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	836	<b>Fax number</b>	01246 456014
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Eleanor Reynolds
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Lynn Asquith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 March 2002		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one HMI and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Meadows Community School is a smaller than average secondary school. Almost all students are White British. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, although the number with statements of special educational needs is nearly double the national average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is slightly above the national average. The school provides for deaf and hearing impaired students through specialist staffing and enhanced facilities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The Meadows Community School is a satisfactory school with several strengths. It is an inclusive school which offers a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities which meets well the talents, interests and future employment needs of individual students. The proportion of students who leave the school with five or more GCSE passes is consistently above national averages and continues to rise. Hearing impaired students are well catered for and effectively integrated into the school community. As a result of very effective care, guidance and support the students' personal development is good. The school works well with a range of agencies to ensure that students are well supported and aware of the opportunities available to them after they leave school. Consequently a very high proportion goes on into education, employment or training. During the inspection, students were well behaved, helpful and took care of their school environment.

Standards in National Curriculum tests and those attaining five or more higher grades at GCSE examinations are below national averages but rising. For example, in 2006 the proportion of students attaining five or more A\* to C grades rose by 9%. Achievement is satisfactory but also improving overall. Nevertheless, the school recognises that progress in English and mathematics needs to be better. It has established useful and detailed systems to monitor student progress. However, subject leaders and teachers are not using this information consistently to plan lessons or to evaluate whether the strategies they are using to tackle any underperformance are making a difference over time.

The capacity of the school to make further improvements is satisfactory. The headteacher leads with energy, humour and humanity. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They have been effective in enabling good staff and departments to carry forward initiatives and share strategies with one another. However, they have been less successful in tackling identified weaknesses, for example, to improve performance in English.

Where teaching is strongest, lessons have clarity of purpose based on appropriate learning outcomes, are well paced and students take responsibility for their learning through group work and independent study, but this is too variable across the school. In many lessons, planning does not sufficiently take account of the ability and needs of different groups of learners, and teachers lead or dominate activities too much.

Governors provide the school with a wide range of expertise and good challenge. They recognise that they need to be informed more frequently of the progress of year groups towards their targets.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that features of good practice in teaching and learning are applied more consistently throughout the school.

- Plan lessons with clear learning outcomes which meet the needs of different groups of students and quickly build upon their prior attainment.
- Use the data available on the achievement of individual students to check regularly on the progress of year groups towards their targets and take swift action to tackle any underperformance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory but standards are below average. When students enter the school their attainment is broadly average. Achievement from Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall, but in English standards are well below that expected.

In 2005, results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were significantly below average in English and mathematics and were below average in science. Results for the 2006 tests, however, showed good improvements in standards for mathematics and science but only limited improvement in English. Science results, for example, matched the national average at level 5 and exceeded the national average at level 6. The percentage of students who gained five or more A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2005 was well below average and girls performed better than boys. GCSE results in 2006, whilst still below average, improved significantly and realistic targets were exceeded in most cases. However, the school's target for the proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades, including English and mathematics, were not met and remain a priority for improvement.

Achievement from Year 7 to Year 11 was satisfactory in 2006 and showed improvement on the previous year and the school's information indicates that this improvement is likely to be maintained in 2007. Lesson observations during the inspection indicate that students make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The majority enjoy school and want to learn, especially when the lessons engage their interest. Behaviour seen during the inspection was always good, although some students and parents feel that the misbehaviour of a minority of students detracts from the learning of others. Bullying is reported as being an issue by some students but decisive action is taken in response to reported incidents. Students feel safe in school and have welcomed the introduction of surveillance cameras.

Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles effectively through a wide range of extra curricular sports which are well attended. Balanced meals have been introduced and vending machines carry healthier options. There is still some improvement to be made in the food options available at break time. The student voice is actively encouraged and 'student evaluators' have a positive impact on the quality of life in

school, for example in the changes to uniform. This process allows students to learn the skills of compromise. The school provides good opportunities for students to contribute to their community. Fund raising is an important aspect of school life. Older students have the opportunity to support younger ones through the peer mentoring system which is of benefit to both parties. Good careers education includes some lessons in financial capability. Work experience is very successful in equipping all students for the world of work. However, students make only satisfactory progress in their literacy and numeracy skills, and there are too few opportunities to work in groups and improve team working skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory and in some cases good. Students readily engage in activities which interest them and harness their enthusiasm. In good lessons, students enjoy a variety of different activities. They benefit from opportunities to think for themselves, extend their understanding in lively question and answer sessions and get tailor-made teacher guidance on how to reach their targets. Where learning is less successful it is because lessons move slowly, teachers talk too much, and there is no clear plan to define what students need to know, understand and do. Consequently students are not challenged fully to bring out their best.

The school has recently developed a rigorous system to track students' progress and set challenging individual targets. This has led to improved progress, for example, by highlighting the need to give extra tuition to a group of boys at risk of underperforming. However, assessment is inconsistent across subjects, especially where realistic targets are set, but students lack the practical advice they need on how to reach them.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of students at the school well. Provision for drama has improved since the last inspection and that for modern foreign languages has introduced innovative measures. Higher-attaining students, for example, are 'fast-tracked' to take a GCSE qualification in a modern foreign language at the end of Year 9. The move towards a broader range of vocational subjects, in addition to a wide range of academic subjects, is proving popular and better suits the needs and aspirations of students across the full attainment range. This is contributing to the school's overall improved performance and helping to foster positive attitudes to school in students less suited to more traditional GCSE courses. There is a well constructed personal, social and health education programme which contributes successfully to students' understanding of responsible citizenship. All students participate in an additional literacy lesson in Year 7, but this is insufficiently well

focused on meeting the needs of students of different abilities. The curriculum is complemented by a wide range of enrichment activities. Students of all abilities take advantage of the various sporting activities, clubs, educational visits and residential opportunities offered. These activities make an important contribution to students' personal development. Productive links with local businesses support work experience and the school is building on these links to further extend the work-related curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its students. Rigorous procedures ensure students' health, welfare and safety. However, the school recognises that students are at risk when using the thoroughfare in the area used for deliveries and parking. Child protection procedures are fully in place and well understood. Care for vulnerable students, in conjunction with other agencies, is a particular strength. Students who are at risk are identified early and intervention put in place to increase their safety.

Learning support assistants and communication support workers provide effective help in the classroom for individual students who need it. Students are guided well in choosing subjects to study from 14 onwards and in planning their future after they leave the school. Parents' views are sought through surveys and responded to. For example, requests for extra reporting on behaviour have been implemented.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher's leadership is good because she has a clear vision for the school's development, based upon a shrewd understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Subject leaders are allowed considerable freedom. While the best use their autonomy productively to ensure constant improvement in teaching, others do not lead colleagues sufficiently successfully to tackle known pockets of underachievement.

Staff survey and respond to the views of students, parents and teachers and have used their findings to improve teaching and the curriculum. Where monitoring is less successful, subject leaders do not fully understand how to use the wealth of data available or deploy it to set targets and help teachers focus their teaching better.

Improvements have been made following opportunities for groups of teachers to learn from each other in training sessions and in mutual observations of each other's work. Here, senior managers get the best out of some teachers by building on their strengths and enabling them to share good practice. However, the school knows that it needs to employ this strategy more consistently to raise standards throughout the school.

The strong team of governors has an astute understanding of key issues affecting students, and brings useful additional professional expertise to the running of the school. The governing body takes action to pursue weaknesses where they occur.

While it asks questions in a constructive and analytical way, it has not yet translated its awareness of underachievement in key subjects into an effective challenge to the school's management.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

18 January 2007

Dear Students

The Meadows Community School, High Street, Old Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S41 9LG

Thank you for welcoming me and the inspection team into your school. We appreciated how you talked to us in your lessons, helped us to find our way around the school and shared your opinions about The Meadows. We enjoyed the opportunities we had to see you learn, be involved in your assembly and the discussions we had with 'school evaluators' which showed how ready you were to express your ideas. Your views and those of your parents have helped us to understand what your school is like.

Your school is one that is ambitious for all of you, keeps improving the range of opportunities you have to study and pursue extra-curricular activities, and wants you to leave the school well prepared for the challenges of adult life. Results in exams and tests are improving and you're making at least satisfactory progress overall during your time at The Meadows. You readily take on responsibilities, for example, as peer mentors.

We know that you'll want your school to get even better. You'll be pleased to know that our recommendations for what the school should do to improve further include that in your lessons you do even more of the work! We know that you like group work and we think you should have more opportunities to do that and take responsibility for your learning. From what we saw of your reaction when you had these opportunities in lessons, you'll enjoy the challenge and your progress will be even better. We'd like to see lessons planned to meet your individual needs and to challenge everyone. We also believe that you can make more progress in English and mathematics.

Thank you again for making our two days with you so enjoyable. Good luck.

Yours sincerely

David Simpson Her Majesty's Inspector