



Meadow Wood School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117691
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290898
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Elizabeth Bull HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Coldharbour Lane
School category	Community special		Bushey, Watford
Age range of pupils	3–11		Hertfordshire WD23 4NN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8420 4720
Number on roll (school)	20	Fax number	020 8420 5497
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Ken Morris
		Headteacher	Mr James Boylan
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Meadow Wood School is a primary special school for up to 28 pupils with physical impairments. Pupils' attainment is well below average because of their learning difficulties and disabilities and all have a statement of special educational need. Pupils typically have a complexity of needs and the majority have been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Many pupils have sensory impairments, epilepsy, extensive medical needs and associated learning difficulties as well. The school serves a wide area with pupils coming from the south and west of Hertfordshire. The pupils come from a broad cross-section of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Around a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a few of these are learning English as an additional language. Meadow Wood is an integrated education and health setting, in which an agreed teaching and learning and development framework integrates children's learning, developmental, health care and social care needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where teamwork, enjoyment, high expectations, and a passionate commitment to the all-round development of individual pupils are characteristics of its undoubted success. Meadow Wood is a welcoming community where children clearly come first and adults are determined to make a positive difference to their life chances. Excellent leadership and management are real strengths of the school. Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the governing body, staff are united in ensuring that pupils receive the best possible education.

The standards reached by pupils are significantly below national averages because of their complex learning difficulties and disabilities, but all pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, make good and occasionally exceptional progress, particularly in their personal and social development and independence skills. Much thought has been given to establishing an excellent curriculum and this has resulted in a vibrant and stimulating learning environment, where the quality of teaching is outstanding and the pupils are very well supported by competent learning support and care assistants, and health care staff. There is an interesting and wide range of learning activities which have been successfully adapted to take account of the pupils' learning needs. Teachers plan carefully taking into account the needs of each pupil. They use a good range of strategies that make learning interesting and keep pupils focused. As a result of this, achievement throughout the school is good. The school's monitoring of achievement is effective because of the consistent and regular way that teachers record the small steps in pupils' learning. However, the school still needs to refine its use of data in order to provide a clearer picture of the progress made by pupils in all subjects and over time.

An outstanding feature of the school is the way in which it works very effectively with parents, health professionals and social services so that the care, guidance and support pupils receive are excellent. Relationships are a very strong feature and pupils feel safe, secure and valued as individuals. As a result their personal development and well-being are outstanding. The close links with mainstream schools further support pupils' academic and social development. Parents hold the school in very high regard. As one parent commented, 'We can't fault the school and staff whatsoever. Our daughter loves school and they give her as much care, understanding and attention as we do at home. What a great school.'

Governors are extremely effective in the way they support and challenge the school. There has been continued improvement since the previous inspection and the school gives excellent value for money. The school is not complacent, and strategic planning and self-evaluation are robust and rigorous. As a result the school has excellent capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine data tracking so the school is able to present a clearer picture of pupils' achievements across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Whilst standards are significantly below average, pupils make good progress in their learning overall. A few pupils make exceptional gains in their learning. This good progress can be attributed to the school's multi-professional approach which focuses on all aspects of pupils' development. Individual education plans provide relevant and challenging targets for pupils to work towards and these are regularly reviewed. Lesson planning takes full account of pupils' targets and the school has set up effective systems to enable staff to record the steps made by pupils towards achieving them. 'Circle time' at the end of each week provides an opportunity for pupils to be involved in reviewing their progress towards the targets set. Subject coordinators play a key role in monitoring the effectiveness of their subject; lesson observations are regular and thorough, and portfolios of moderated work are used to accurately support the assessment of pupils' progress. Whilst much has been put in place with regard to tracking pupils' progress and recording achievement, there is a need for further refinement so that the school has a clearer picture of pupil progress across the school and the impact of any actions it has taken to raise standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils is outstanding as a result of the excellent teaching, curriculum and care the school provides. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported by their personal, social and health education, life skills and religious education lessons, special events like the recent 'World Book Day' and assemblies. Visitors to the school and visits in the community further support pupils' personal development. One example out of many is an arts project which involves mainstream pupils regularly supporting pupils from Meadow Wood in creating a piece of art work; during the inspection pupils were painting the 'face sculptures' they had made. This collaborative working greatly supports pupils' social development and helps pupils to learn to appreciate each other's differences.

Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in excellent attendance and behaviour. They feel safe and secure, and delight in all the activities on offer. Pupils have a good sense of living in a community and appreciate the care and support provided for them. Healthy lifestyles are promoted and they learn about keeping safe. Pupils take on responsibility from a very early age by 'having a job' such as delivering the registers or putting equipment away. Pupils are regularly involved in fund raising and their most recent event was 'Jeans for Genes day'. Through activities such as these they gain in

self-esteem and learn skills that help to prepare them very well for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching has many strengths that result in good gains in learning, and during the inspection all teaching observed was outstanding or good. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of pupils' abilities and use this well in planning lessons. This very high quality planning is a key factor in ensuring that teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Considerable emphasis is placed on a multi-sensory, active approach and consequently pupils are frequently engaged in active and collaborative tasks that capture their interest and attention. Teachers successfully maintain a calm and purposeful classroom atmosphere through their expertise in creating clearly structured learning activities. Teachers, learning support and care assistants, and health staff work very closely together to ensure that all pupils are given the level of support that enables them to achieve the tasks set. Learning is further supported by the very good relationships between staff and pupils and the positive reward systems in place, such as 'stars of the week'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for learning. It carefully balances the entitlement of access to the whole curriculum with the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, medical, communication and sensory needs of the children. Consequently all pupils benefit from purposeful and interesting activities designed to enrich their educational experiences. Pupils derive enormous benefit from an extensive programme of activities and visits which supports their personal development very well and contributes positively to their achievement. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed a recent visit from a local museum which brought a range of toys from the past and present for the pupils to explore and play with. This was followed up by a visit to the museum itself to see the full range of artefacts on display. The curriculum encourages pupils to lead healthy lives by focusing on personal, social and health education (PSHE), life skills, healthy eating, physical activity and emotional health and well-being. The PSHE and life skills programme sets out to enable children to develop confidence and responsibility, play an active role as citizens and develop knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The school does this very well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Considerable attention is given to each individual pupil's needs and the school has a strong commitment to knowing and supporting all the pupils. The very positive

relationships throughout the school, with home and with other support agencies, add greatly to this. Parents fully appreciate the high quality of care and support; they feel pupils are safe and well looked after. One parent stated, 'We think our daughter is having the best start in life and education by attending Meadow Wood School.' Home-school communication books ensure effective communication between home and school is maintained. Very good academic guidance enables all pupils to achieve as well as they can. Individual education plans are well used to personalise the curriculum for each student and these make a significant contribution to the pupils' good progress in personal, social and independence skills. Progress is regularly assessed and monitored throughout the year. Where possible pupils are involved in the target setting process and pupils know how well they are doing because they receive clear constructive feedback. Pupils contribute to school decisions through the work of the student council.

Child protection procedures and arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and reviewed regularly. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments for visits and trips are thorough and well attended to. Extensive liaison with other professionals, agencies and local schools successfully ensures pupils' needs are well met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership of the school is outstanding. The multi-professional approach and teamwork is a significant strength of the school and serves to meet pupils' needs extremely well. There is a clear unity of purpose throughout the school and a feeling of optimism and purpose. The headteacher, supported by a very able leadership team and governing body, provides an extremely effective and clear educational direction for the school. He has high aspirations for the school and for each pupil. The headteacher has enabled all staff to participate in highly appropriate professional development and this has made learning more effective for pupils. The school's effectiveness is carefully evaluated and action is taken to further improve, even in the areas that are the strongest. Strategic planning is effective and the leadership team has correctly identified the areas for development. The leadership team effectively monitor the school's work and there is clarity of understanding as to how it can improve. The tracking and analysis of pupils' achievement is developing well.

Governors play a full strategic role in guiding and supporting the school's work and provide challenge for further improvement. Regular visits and frequent meetings mean that governors play an important part in the school's success. As a result governance is outstanding. Resources are managed extremely effectively and the school provides excellent value for money. The school has excellent potential for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

1 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Meadow Wood School, Coldharbour Lane, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 4NN

It was a real pleasure to visit your school recently. You made me very welcome. You told me how outstanding you think your school is and I agree. Your staff are fully committed to helping you, and this encourages you to always try to do your best. Excellent teaching and a very interesting curriculum help you to make good progress. Meeting with some of you in the school council was really helpful. You spoke very highly of the school, the staff and all the activities you enjoy. Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires. Thank you and well done.

These are its strengths:

- the school is a happy place to be and you really enjoy being there
- the school looks after you very well and you feel safe
- all the staff work together to make sure you receive the best possible education and care
- you have lots of opportunities to work with pupils from other schools.

Your school needs to do one thing to become even better:

- use information about how well you do to make sure that everyone can see the progress you make in all the different activities and subjects.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Liz Bull

Lead inspector