

Meadow High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102462
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	308014
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Lily Evans

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	157
6th form	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Burton
Headteacher	Mr Ross Macdonald
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Royal Lane Hillingdon Uxbridge UB8 3QU
Telephone number	01895 443310
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Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Meadow High was until September 2007 a school and sixth form for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. It now accepts pupils and students with complex difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. More than a quarter of pupils are now in the sixth form, which has doubled in size since the last inspection. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The school has a very diverse catchment area and an above average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has gained Healthy Schools Award and has performed highly in the 'National Well-Being' programme. Prior to the arrival of the current headteacher four years ago, the school had four headteachers in one year, and had substantial financial difficulties.

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. Parents agree with this judgement and one rightly stated, 'We have been impressed with the quality of the teachers and staff, variety and abundance of activities and cheerful and professional environment.' The school ensures pupils are happy, safe and well supported. It prepares students effectively for their future, providing excellent opportunities for experiencing the world of work. Pupils and students have positive views of their school. They are proud of their sporting achievements and are credited for many other successes. Each student's portfolio of certificates bears testament to how the school successfully builds good self-esteem and confidence through valuing their achievements. Pupils eat healthy school lunches and know about healthy living. Relationships are strong; pupils behave well and are kind and respectful to each other.

From mostly low starting points on entry, pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 11 and that of students in the sixth form is good, enabling most students to gain several externally accredited awards including GCE (General Certificate of Education) A-level art. They benefit from good teaching throughout the school and some teaching of outstanding quality. Teachers plan, adapt and enhance the curriculum well with a rich programme of visits and visitors, including residential visits. For example, they make Shakespearean plays such as 'The Tempest' accessible and enjoyable to students. They do this by using theatre, film extracts and role-play to develop understanding. These also enhance their good personal, social, spiritual and cultural development, as well as speaking and listening skills. Teachers are clear about what pupils will learn and they review learning routinely at the end of lessons. Learning is generally planned to have activities suitable for all the pupils in each ability and age group. From the scrutiny of work and in a few lessons observed, it is evident that some higher attainers do not always have enough challenge in the work set for them.

This enthusiastic headteacher has shown strong leadership and has led the school with great determination since the last inspection. There have been good improvements, including an increase in the numbers of qualified staff, and to the quality of teaching and learning, financial management, as well as adapting to increasing numbers of sixth formers and in responding to changing the designation of the school. He and his dedicated deputy headteacher and senior managers are successfully striving towards their vision in which 'Every child deserves the right to achieve their highest potential.' Since the last inspection, the roles of curriculum managers have developed well in adapting the curriculum and in developing assessment within each subject area. Although a good start has been made, there is still more to do to ensure that they are ready to monitor and moderate standards of work across the school to establish consistency of practice. Capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form has strong leadership and provides a good quality of education for all its students. They make good progress and grow in maturity as they study for exams and continue to develop their language and communication skills. The curriculum is outstanding. This is because it is tailored to students' needs and focuses on preparing students for adult life and further education. The major emphasis on work related learning is very effective in helping the transition of students from school to college or work.

The tenacity of the head of sixth form has enabled valuable links to be made with a local college and a school sixth form. It is now possible for students to transfer from Meadow High School to a placement that can provide appropriate courses to meet their individual needs, which otherwise cannot be met in their own sixth form. Students make an excellent contribution to the community through work for charity and by helping children in the lower part of the school in the 'buddy' system for Year 7 pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the most able pupils are challenged in lessons so they all achieve as well as they can.
- Develop coordinators' roles to improve the monitoring and moderation of standards in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most pupils join the school with low levels of attainment. They make good progress through the school from their starting points. There is a particularly apt focus on personal development, which ensures pupils become more independent and confident in their own capabilities by the end of Year 11. Pupils' progress in reading and writing is improving year on year as they learn to read and spell by building up their phonic and comprehension skills methodically. They have daily reading practice and the most able pupils become independent readers. Those pupils who require signing communication and symbol writing, progress well with good support from their teaching assistants. Higher attaining pupils, especially those with autistic spectrum disorder, make less progress in some lessons than they are capable of because their tasks are insufficiently challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is good. Pupils and students are considerate, respectful and tolerant of each other as they work together. They like coming to school and enjoy their lessons. This is reflected in their satisfactory attendance when compared to all schools nationally. Pupils are courteous and helpful to visitors. They have a good sense of right and wrong and are not worried about bullying because it occurs rarely. They know who to go to if they have any fears or worries. Pupils appreciate the school rules that do not allow unhealthy snacks. They also enjoy lunchtime and after-school clubs. Virtually all eligible pupils and students enjoy opportunities for work experience, which helps them to behave with maturity. Pupils' social development is strong. They make excellent contributions to the community and when they are exceptionally caring of others, they are put forward for a 'Jack Petchey' award. The school forum contributes greatly to the well-being of the school community through practical suggestions for improvement. Pupils throughout the school help support several charities including 'Wish upon a star' and 'Child Poverty'. Trips out of school such as to theatre, art galleries and football events and awards for achievement contribute well to pupils' spiritual well being. Pupils develop good cultural awareness through the curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers plan interesting lessons making good use of interactive whiteboards, for example in mathematics, science and English. They use teaching aids such as games, shapes, number squares and small whiteboards effectively. These help pupils' concentration and understanding, enabling them to work successfully so that they make good progress. When the enthusiasm of the teacher and the questioning is of a high quality, this inspires pupils to throw themselves wholeheartedly into topics. This results in spirited discussions such as when discussing characters in 'The Tempest'. Although teachers plan learning for different abilities, higher attaining pupils could have more challenge at times, for example in mathematics and writing tasks, especially where there is a wide range of ability in the class. In the work in their books some higher attaining pupils have insufficient practice in writing narratively, which would help them achieve the next level in their work. Teachers' marking is not always linked well enough to pupils' learning goals. As a result, pupils are less focused than they could be on how to reach the next level in their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is appropriate and generally well matched to pupils needs. The school population has changed considerably in recent years and the school is continually striving to modify planning to meet these changes such as the increasing numbers of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, and in particular, those who are high achievers. Programmes of study allow pupils to work towards nationally accredited certificates from ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority). A highly effective programme of work-related learning provides pupils in Year 11 with a work experience placement lasting two weeks. Placements are carefully chosen to ensure success and wherever possible, overcome many of students' difficulties and disabilities. There is a wide variety of sports and games activities at lunchtimes and a few after school which enable pupils to be fit and well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides good safety and levels of care. There are robust procedures for the safeguarding of pupils and these meet fully the statutory requirements. Detailed risk assessment of premises and activities takes place and appropriate detailed checks are made concerning all adults who work with pupils. The school ensures pupils have someone to turn to if they are upset or worried. There are very clear procedures to deal with any bullying or racist incidents that may arise. There are very strong links with professionals outside of school. There are good links with parents although many parents have expressed a preference for more frequent review meetings. The school listens carefully to the views of the school forum and responds with action when appropriate.

Although procedures for monitoring standards are good, sometimes inaccuracies in the judgements made by teachers occur because they lack confidence in levelling work. Assessment information is used effectively to monitor achievement, set targets in Individual Education Plans and to plan lessons. Not all pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

In the last four years, under the leadership of the current headteacher, there have been many improvements. Fifty percent of the teaching staff has changed, unqualified staff have left, the governing body has been renewed, attendance has improved and clear staff responsibilities have been established. The head teacher and managers have accurately evaluated and prioritised actions that need to be taken following their change of status. Key stage managers' review of the curriculum has led to important changes. These include the adoption of the Primary model in Years 7 to 9, introduction of signing and symbol communication and valuable work to ensure successful transitions from primary and secondary schools. Their monitoring roles and those of subject leaders, who have worked hard to review their subjects and establish assessment within each, are at an early stage of development. Although the headteacher monitors effectively the quality of teaching and learning, teachers are now assessing their own proficiency in teaching basic skills. This is efficiently assisting the school in identifying and meeting training needs. Similarly, the performance of learning support assistants is assessed and information used to identify training needs. Governors provide sound support for the school, which uses their expertise efficiently in a number of practical ways. They have yet to be involved in reviewing the progress pupils are making.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

04 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Meadow High School, Uxbridge, UB8 3QU

My colleague and I would like to thank you all for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school the other day. We promised to write to tell you what we thought about your school. We agree with you that Meadow High is a good school and that you get on well with each other. These are the things your school does well and what it should do to improve.

- Your teachers plan interesting lessons that you enjoy and where you make good progress.
- They help you to be confident and independent and to care about each other.
- They build up your portfolio of achievements in many different areas.
- They plan work experience very well so that you can learn about the world of work.
- They help you to lead a healthy lifestyle and to know what foods are good for you.
- They plan an interesting programme of learning for you and make sure all of you can join in.
- They plan a good range of sports activities and competitions.
- In the sixth form, very good programmes of study help you to prepare for the next step after school.
- They help you to achieve highly in art.
- They should make sure that all of you have work that is the right level of difficulty and that you have enough practice in improving your writing.
- The school should check that teachers more consistently assess the level of your work correctly.

We think you can help your teachers by continuing to do your best work at all times.

With very best wishes for your future.

Lily Evans

Lead Inspector