

Meade Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105614
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	308895
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	David Muir HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Weinberg
Headteacher	Mr Eamonn Gallagher
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2006
School address	Middleton Road Crumpsall Manchester Lancashire M8 4NB
Telephone number	0161 795 8445
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Meade Hill School is part of the Manchester Federation of three schools for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils have been excluded from other schools. They mainly come from north and east Manchester, although there have recently been some referrals from other parts of the city. Year 11 pupils attend another site 8 miles away, which is shared with the other federation schools. There are 7 girls and 38 boys on roll. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and a small number from Black Caribbean and mixed race backgrounds. All pupils have English as their home language. Many of the pupils come from backgrounds of social deprivation and a little over 80% are entitled to free school meals. A very small number of pupils are looked-after by the local authority. A new headteacher and assistant headteacher took up their posts at Easter 2008. Next year the school will relocate to the site of a high school under the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme. The school has achieved the 'Sportsmark' award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Meade Hill provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. A number of aspects of its provision are good and it is a rapidly improving school due to the effect of recent actions by senior managers, the support of the federation and the local authority. The school is in a strong position to continue to improve.

Due to their previous educational histories, all pupils arrive in the school with attainment which is much lower than expected for pupils of their age. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall although it varies from good to inadequate. This is a key reason not all pupils achieve as well as they could. In lessons, there are strong working partnerships between the teacher and the teaching assistants who are assigned to class groups. The teaching assistants provide much needed continuity for the pupils in their daily routines and they support the learning very effectively.

The personal development of the pupils is good and a strength of the school. Attendance is average and increasing, and recent successful initiatives to encourage persistent non-attenders into school have had a significant impact on attendance figures. This, together with decreased incidents of unacceptable behaviour and an increasing ethos of respect between all members of the school community, has had a notable positive impact on the pupils' attitudes to their learning. Staff care for the pupils well and have a good understanding of their needs. Pupils feel safe and they say that any incidents of bullying which may occur are taken seriously by staff and dealt with effectively. There is regular contact between the school and the homes of the pupils to promote a consistency of approach to the pupils' behaviour management. Parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with parents show that they appreciate this contact.

The curriculum is good and is improving as it is tailored well to meet the individual needs of pupils. In particular, changes at Key Stage 4 have allowed more opportunities for the older pupils to study a wider range of subjects and there has been an increase in the range of qualifications gained. There is an impressive array of sporting and other outdoor activities on offer in the school, including residential trips to the Lake District. These are helping pupils to develop more mature attitudes through activities such as team building games. A recent, outstandingly successful innovation across the federation is the setting up of a 'girls group'. This has enabled girls from across the federation, and from mainstream schools, to work regularly together on issues which affect them as adolescent girls in a largely male environment. This has had a significantly positive impact on their awareness of themselves and on their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Leadership and management of the school are good overall. Significant changes in the past year have strengthened Meade Hill's links with the federation and increased the sharing of good practice between schools, as well as providing high quality support to the recently appointed leadership team. The clear vision handed down from the federation is helping to drive up standards. The leadership team is managing change well with the support of the federation's principal. Good communication from the headteacher has led to a unity of purpose amongst the staff and recent changes have also helped to raise morale. Assessment systems are starting to enable the school to monitor the progress of the pupils effectively but the school is aware that the systems are not developed enough to enable detailed monitoring of groups of pupils. Senior managers are using the analysis of pupils' needs to identify the areas where staff require training. Recent federation-wide training sessions have been focused on enabling

staff to teach individual pupils more effectively. Governance is good. Governors receive regular reports on the aspects identified as needing most improvement, such as attendance, the curriculum and behaviour.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop assessment procedures which will enable the school to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils over time.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good and none is inadequate.
- Provide pupils with the skills to enable them to be engaged as active partners in their own learning and to develop their skills in self-assessment.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average. However, the number and variety of GCSE passes in recent years has increased steadily and the school's tracking system suggests that this upward trend will continue this summer.

Pupils arrive in the school with standards often well below national expectations for their age, particularly in literacy. Data from the new tracking system show pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their time in the school with a few making good progress. Nevertheless, some pupils are not making up lost ground from previous years and underachieve. Standards could be higher.

The school assesses pupils on entry to the school, which provides a baseline to measure individual pupils' progress. The school has started to raise standards in literacy and extra input for some pupils in spelling and reading has helped them to progress well in those areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. The pupils understand the importance of healthy eating although this is not always adopted outside of school. Despite this, the school council has campaigned for higher standards of food at lunchtime and the pupils value their breakfast clubs where they eat toast and have a drink before the start of lessons. They are increasingly aware of issues such as body image and personal hygiene through work in both the curriculum and through federation groups established to work with specific pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school. The vast majority of pupils now travel independently to and from school, showing a developing maturity. When they are in school, they feel safe and state that any concerns which they may have are taken seriously and dealt with effectively by staff. The school's 'restorative justice' approach has produced some very positive outcomes in disputes between pupils, allowing all those involved to find a positive solution to the problems.

Attendance is now satisfactory and getting better. Given many pupils' past history of poor attendance, this is a good success for the school. Pupils and their families are aware that the school is taking a very proactive approach to ensure attendance improves. Pupils' behaviour is improving and this is evidenced by the marked reduction in the number of incidents and

exclusions. When pupils request a five minute 'time-out' from lessons, they go to the designated area where they continue with their class work. This provision is treated with maturity and respect by the pupils and has had a significant effect on de-escalating difficult situations.

There is good participation in sports and other outdoor events, which the pupils enjoy. They also participate enthusiastically in residential visits where they learn skills such as rock climbing, abseiling and participate in team building activities. The pupils participate in a very wide range of sporting activities, giving them an opportunity to experience activities which they would not normally attempt. The school now has teams in a number of sports such as tag rugby and football and compete with notable success in region-wide competitions with mainstream schools.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. The pupils are developing age appropriate social skills with their peers, and relationships are increasingly positive within the school. Pupils also regularly attend trips to the theatre in Manchester and London.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are of a satisfactory quality overall. The teaching varies in quality from good to inadequate. The school has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and is putting measures in place to improve them. Positive relationships between pupils and staff in lessons are particularly evident in the better lessons. Where teaching is better it is clear that staff have a good knowledge of pupils' levels of work and provide them with suitably challenging work to help them to progress in their learning. Teachers know the pupils well and generally manage the pupils' learning effectively.

The assessment of pupils' performance and levels is increasingly robust. The school has implemented a number of initiatives to raise the standard of literacy across the school. This includes using various schemes, such as reading recovery and therapeutic planning, to overcome particular needs such as dyslexia. This has resulted in a raising of standards in reading and spelling for pupils targeted for extra support. Higher levels of literacy have also helped to improve learning in other subjects. Pupils are becoming involved in assessing their own work, although this is not yet consistent across all subjects and key stages.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It matches pupils' needs and is varied and relevant. Recent changes in the Key Stage 4 curriculum have increased the offer of academic and vocational subjects. This is the result of the school and federation working effectively together to increase learning opportunities for pupils, based on their needs and interests. The older pupils also participate in work experience. The school now provides more opportunities for pupils to gain external qualifications such as ECDL (a qualification in using computers), Duke of Edinburgh award, and an increased variety of GCSEs and vocational qualifications.

At Key Stage 3, pupils are provided with the full National Curriculum, with an emphasis on increasing basic skills such as numeracy and literacy. Extra teaching sessions are also provided before school for pupils with particular needs. Afternoons provide opportunities for pupils to experience other activities such as sports coaching, which provide a good balance between classroom-based work and practical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Good relationships with parents have contributed to increased attendance. On the first day of pupils' absence, teaching assistants visit their homes to encourage the pupils to return to school or to teach them at home. Parents appreciate the weekly and sometimes daily contact between home and school. This often happens for positive reasons which, for some parents, is a new experience as they say that they have only had negative contact from previous schools. Pupils have behaviour targets and curriculum targets, which are discussed with them regularly. Parents are also aware of these targets and reinforce them at home. Pupils are provided with regular feedback on their work with positive comments and advice on how they can improve. The school is aware of inconsistency between subjects and is working to identify and disseminate good practice across the school. The school's tracking system does not yet monitor the progress of different groups of students in the school, although individual pupils feel well supported and guided in reaching their targets.

As well as setting up effective specialist groups within the federation, such as the 'girls group', the school is starting to work well other agencies to support pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear, shared vision across the federation and the school, which is communicated well to the school community and is helping to raise expectations and standards.

The leadership teams in the school and the federation are working well together to improve many areas of the school. Meade Hill's self-evaluation is accurate, showing a good understanding of its work and an awareness of strengths and areas for development. Lesson observations are regularly undertaken to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. These are accurate, providing a clear picture of the areas needing to be developed. This information is used well to inform a programme of continuing professional development to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to meet the needs of all pupils in the school. Although members of the leadership team have only been in their current posts since Easter, they know the school well and the changes that they have already implemented have helped to raise staff morale. The work of the leadership team is well supported by effective, joined-up working with the federation and the local authority.

The governors know Meade Hill well, are kept informed of developments by the leadership team of the school and the principal of the federation, and provide appropriate challenge and support. Capacity to improve is good because the school has shown it can take action that makes a difference.

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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
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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
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

I would like to thank you very much for your welcome when we visited your school recently. It was very interesting to hear your views and to see you at work. I would like to tell you what I found out about your school.

Meade Hill gives you a satisfactory education and is a school that is improving.

You are very happy with the recent changes in the school. The biggest changes are in your behaviour and your attendance. You now come to school more regularly and when you are in school, you know how to behave well and in a mature way. The governors, know how the school can improve and they, your teachers and teaching assistants are all working very hard to make sure that you learn as much as you can in your time in Meade Hill. Teaching is satisfactory and I am asking the school to make sure that it gets even better so that you can learn more. I have also asked the school to help you to understand how well you are learning and to know how you can improve in your lessons. Some of you are already asking for extra help or attend groups which help you learn more. That shows me that you have a good attitude to your learning.

You also have a lot of opportunities to take part in different sports and trips to theatres and other places. It was good to see how proud you were about your success in the football competition this week. These things give you a lot of chances to experience many different things and this is something that the school is rightfully proud of. Your parents are also right to be very happy with the work that the school does.

Teachers are now checking on your progress and giving you targets in your work and to help improve your behaviour. This is so they know if you are getting better at what you are doing in school and if you are not, they can give you even more help. You can help by telling them when you feel the targets are too hard or too easy!

I hope that you continue to help the school to improve and I wish you all success for the future at school and thank you again for your very warm welcome.