

Meldreth Manor School - A Scope School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	873/6008
Unique Reference Number	110920
Inspection number	320744
Inspection dates	17-18 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Meldreth Manor School was opened in May 1966. The school is part of Scope's education services and occupies a large purpose-built campus in Meldreth village. The campus also caters for adults with learning and associated difficulties. This provision is inspected by the Social Care Standards Commission and was not part of this inspection. Meldreth Manor School was last inspected in March 2003. The school is registered for 85 pupils aged between six and 19. It is a co-educational day and residential school for pupils with cerebral palsy, profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe physical disabilities and complex medical needs. Consequently, pupils' attainment is very low and all require a high level of, and continual, adult support. The great majority of pupils are placed by local authorities in the east of England

There are 29 pupils on roll aged between 8 and 19, of whom 28 are boarders. All have a statement of special educational need. The school's residential care provision has been inspected regularly by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate. Their last inspection, in September 2006, showed all of the standards evaluated were met and some were exceeded. As a result, there were no recommendations made for improvements.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is satisfactory and is adequate to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory and pupils make sound progress. Pupils' personal development is good because they are supported well by the large number of experienced and well-qualified staff. The welfare, health and safety of pupils is good but, in particular, the expert attention of therapists and health care workers means the promotion of pupils' health is outstanding. Parents are very positive about the school's success. The school has made satisfactory progress on improvements since the last inspection. The school meets most of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils' learning opportunities benefit from the school's successful adaptations of a published curriculum. This has schemes of work that are

designed specifically for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It includes a satisfactory programme of work for post-16 students as well, which focuses on preparation for adult life. Personal, social and health education, including sex and relationship education, is planned satisfactorily and is an integral part of the whole curriculum. The school is seeking a much closer working relationship to strengthen the links between teachers, therapists, health care professionals and others in planning the curriculum and supporting pupils. However, at present, the level of collaboration between the different staff is satisfactory because of the ease of communication. Care programmes, carried out in the evenings and weekends, complement the work done in school and contribute well to pupils' progress.

Staff know pupils well and have a good appreciation of their profound and multiple learning difficulties and their other needs, most particularly as a result of a thorough multi-disciplinary assessment carried out when pupils first arrive. Work and activities in the classroom and beyond are subsequently set at levels that are appropriate to individual pupils and their different capabilities. This places due emphasis on sensory approaches to learning and to promoting communication skills. Music is a strength as listening to sounds and making sounds offers so much to pupils' learning experience. Music also leads to participation and performances all of which adds to their good engagement and enjoyment of learning. The broad range of work and activities in the curriculum, together with the school's substantial therapeutic provision, ensures that the requirements specified in each pupil's statement of special educational need are met.

The long term planning of pupils' work is satisfactory. The whole of a morning or afternoon session each day is timetabled for one particular subject. While it is understood that opportunities to promote key areas of learning, such as communication, numeracy or manipulation skills, are incorporated, they are not planned specifically. Thus, if they occur it is often by coincidence rather than clear intention. In addition, pupils' individual targets and learning objectives are not effectively matched to the curriculum plans. The school has made an accurate evaluation of what needs to be improved to further strengthen the curriculum. It is aiming for greater precision in planning and stronger coordination of the staff's wide expertise. However, a detailed plan of action is not in place to achieve these improvements within a clear timescale.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Recent monitoring of teaching and emphasis on providing clear learning objectives is beginning to take hold but is not yet having an impact on learning. Whilst learning objectives are being identified, they are not playing an effective part in determining the best methods and activities used to support good learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their communication and physical development in particular, but the pace of learning is sometimes too slow. The links between pupils' multi-disciplinary assessment, their individual education plan and lesson objectives are often not firm enough to focus teaching sharply on what pupils need to learn. A suitable scale for measuring the very small steps of pupils' progress is in place, which is an improvement since the last

inspection. However, the skill with which data is collected and used is limited because assessment skills have not been developed far enough. This means the school's information on progress is not always accurate and its use is limited in its support for planning future lessons. In relation to their immediate needs, pupils are supported well in lessons because of the high number of support staff who know their pupils well. However, support assistants are not always sufficiently well briefed in relation to their support for teaching and learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. High quality relationships with pupils which are based on detailed knowledge of their needs means staff help them feel secure and reassured. This builds pupils' confidence and interest, allowing their personal qualities to emerge. Pupils achieve a good deal of independence in managing as much of their personal needs as possible. They make good efforts to get from one part of the school to another while others show great determination to communicate and join in activities. Behaviour is good as pupils respond positively to high expectations and enjoy daily routines. Their enjoyment of school, work and activities is good, which is reflected in their high level of attendance. Trips out into the locality and visits further afield such as for shopping, train journeys and church services allows pupils to make a good contribution to the community and all of this helps towards preparing pupils well for the future. They take part regularly in fund raising to support their choice of good causes. Pupils increase their independence and their confidence in decision-making. They take part through the school council and in meetings of boarders in choosing leisure activities and making proposals on improving the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. High levels of supervision and support are underpinned by thorough and extremely well documented systems. Detailed and well-established child protection arrangements, first aid procedures and the good logging of information about pupils when significant events in their lives occur, ensure that pupils' are well protected from harm. Care for pupils' medical and physical needs are paramount in all that the school does and all staff are very well versed about how to deal with these. The attention to, and management of, pupils' health needs are outstanding. The good network of health care professionals, coupled with the excellent communication and sharing of information, ensures that health matters are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The school makes very good provision to ensure pupils eat healthily and meals are carefully regulated to suit individual dietary requirements. Similarly, pupils' physical skills and their fitness is promoted very well. Site health and safety is well monitored and managed and checks made regularly so that any issues are dealt with immediately. All aspects of fire safety are in place and are checked systematically and according to the correct schedule. The school has a thorough plan for improving accessibility to the premises, the curriculum and information. Although the school has detailed risk assessments

for most activities and very thorough ones for individual pupils, not all school staff follow the policy and guidance provided by systematically assessing risks for school trips.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school is efficient in carrying out all the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of all staff and others who work or have contact with pupils. It maintains a single central register of staff and others as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises have recently been refurbished; much is of high quality and provides an excellent learning and living environment for pupils. The accommodation provides ample facilities to ensure pupils' learning and other needs are met. Residential, teaching and therapy areas all have plenty of space. There is good wheelchair access throughout and ample storage space for the large amount of equipment needed for pupils. Entrances to the various buildings and corridors are wide and well signposted. Classrooms and the good number of therapy areas are all well resourced to meet pupils' needs, including hoists and other essential equipment. There are an appropriate number of specialist teaching areas to support a broad curriculum including science, information and communication technology, physical education, design and technology, a sensory studio and a good outdoor sensory area. The grounds are spacious. Pupils make good use of the long perimeter pathway for exercise and to practise walking, which has a positive impact on them developing a healthy lifestyle.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school and its parent organisation, Scope, publish detailed information on the range of its services for children and their families. The school prospectus is comprehensive in describing the curriculum and its arrangements for supporting pupils. Close contact is maintained with parents and at regular intervals they receive informative reports, and are invited to attend reviews, on their children's progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedure meets all the requirements. The school's prospectus draws attention clearly to its availability. The procedures are concise, easy for parents and others to read and to understand.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure the school implements its policy on risk assessment relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- strengthen the planning of the curriculum and lessons to ensure the links between learning objectives and pupils' individual targets are more secure
- improve the accuracy of assessment to aid a more precise analysis of pupils' progress
- provide appropriately detailed action plans, which include clear timescales, for the range of improvements identified by the school.

School details

Name of school	Meldreth Manor School - A Scope School
DCSF number	873/6008
Unique reference number	110920
Type of school	Special
Status	Independent
Date school opened	May 1966
Age range of pupils	9-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 26 Girls: 3 Total: 29
Number of boarders	Boys: 25 Girls: 3 Total: 28
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 26 Girls: 3 Total: 29
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 10 Girls: 1 Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£112,000
Address of school	Fenny Lane Meldreth Royston Hertfordshire SG8 6LG
Telephone number	01763 268 000
Fax number	01763 263 316
Email address	meldreth.manor@scope.org.uk
Headteacher	Mr Roger Gale
Proprietor	SCOPE
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon AI
Dates of inspection	17-18 January 2008