

Meadowhead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107149
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	324538
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Heather Barnett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1670
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Rosling
Headteacher	Ms C James
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
School address	Dyche Lane Sheffield South Yorkshire S8 8BR
Telephone number	0114 237 2723
Fax number	0114 283 9855

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Meadowhead is a larger than average comprehensive school situated on the southern outskirts of Sheffield. The school moved to a new single site in January 2007. It gained specialist language college status in 2001 and has achieved a range of awards, such as Investors in People, International School Award and Healthy Schools Award. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, but varies between year groups from 8% to 18%. There are lower than average numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The students attending the school come mainly from the local community, covering areas of social advantage and disadvantage.

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 with some outstanding features. There is a strong focus on continuous improvement in the school and this has been enhanced by the new building. The school is a secure and productive environment where students feel safe and enjoy their studies.

Achievement and standards have shown an improving trend over a number of years and are good. However, the school is not complacent and has a number of strategies in place to improve further. Students' personal development and well-being are good and their understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle is excellent. Attendance is good and improving and students are well prepared for the next stage of their life when they leave the school.

Teaching and learning are good. Students are clear about what they are meant to be doing and how to reach their targets. However, sometimes students are not very active in lessons and their independent learning skills need to be further developed. The curriculum is being developed very well. It is now good and improving. The range of courses available meets the needs of all groups of students and is strongly supporting the rise in attainment. Enrichment is outstanding and reflects the influence of the specialist status.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. There are many new initiatives in this area and their positive effect can be seen in areas such as the improved attendance and reducing permanent exclusions. There is highly effective working with other agencies to ensure the most vulnerable students receive the support they need. The information, advice and guidance given to students at points of transition are very good and help students in making the right choices about their future.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is highly effective and has led the school through the transition to the new building very well. The workforce reforms have been used to good effect and there is a strong senior leadership team. Thorough systems are in place and staff are clear about the future direction of the school. The specialism has helped the school to develop wide-ranging links and partnerships, to the benefit of students. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. Meadowhead provides good value for money, has progressed well since the last inspection and demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of learning improves so that students are more actively involved and develop independent learning skills.
- Further improve student progress throughout the school, so that it is consistently good or better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. The school has successfully managed to sustain a steady improvement in standards overall, through a period of transition. Students enter the school with broadly average attainment and they make good progress by the time they leave school with attainment above average. Most students make this good progress, although progress is slower in some areas, for some students who join the school late, or have poor attendance. Results at Key Stage 4 have been consistently above average since 2006.

School data for 2008 indicate this upward trend over time is continued, with standards above average for students for a number of indicators. Standards at Key Stage 3 are average in mathematics and science but below average in English. This is a continued trend over a period of three years.

The school continues to make improvements in progress due to the comprehensive systems in place to track student progression and support for those individuals doing less well. This reflects the determination and enthusiasm of staff to raise achievement and standards through a raft of whole-school initiatives, such as developments in the curriculum. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other students, because their learning is closely monitored and targets are used well to help them do their best. Targets set for all students have largely been met. Students are aware of their targets, which are challenging and students are guided well by staff in order to meet them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Their cultural development is particularly strong with the students gaining a global perspective as a result of the language college status. The school is a harmonious community where students from different backgrounds relate well with each other. The behaviour of the vast majority of students is good or better, both in and out of class and when off site representing the school. There are a very small number of students who on occasion misbehave but the school ensures that they do not disturb the learning for other students and skilled staff work with them to improve their behaviour.

Attendance at the school has continued to improve and is now good and students are punctual to their lessons. They enjoy their new school building and all it offers and feel very safe and secure. Students are rightly proud that there are very few incidents of bullying or racism. Their response to the provision put in place to promote a healthy lifestyle is outstanding. They eat healthily when at school, participate fully in an extensive range of physical activities made available and feel positive about themselves. Students act as peer mentors, sports leaders and members of the school council and make a good contribution to school life. The school is keen to extend initiatives in this area further. Students leave school with the qualifications, advice and confidence necessary to progress into further education, training and employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and improving. Good use has been made of the school's specialist college status to guide improvement. As a result there is a significant emphasis within teaching on good quality assessment and follow-up activity. This is evident in lessons, with students being given plenty of information about what is required to meet the level they are targeted to attain. Teachers provide ample opportunity for discussion and are effective in the review of work undertaken. Marking is generally, but not universally, good; in a small minority of cases it is too brief to be helpful. Students have a very good understanding of the progress they are making. Students respond well to teaching, although at times they are somewhat passive and do not contribute as well as they might. This is particularly the case when there is a lack of opportunity for independence in their learning.

The school's extensive monitoring helps direct staff training, particularly the current focus on developing inspirational teaching and learning. Some teaching of particularly high quality is already providing students with the stimulus that captures their imagination and full attention. The skilful use of information and communications technology (ICT) often makes a significant contribution to this. Overall, there is a good level of consistency in teaching, with detailed planning, good behaviour management and effective use of the rewards system.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and improving. Students enjoy the rich curriculum on offer and achieve well. The curriculum prepares students well for later life. The school adopts the principle of 'stage not age' when deciding upon courses for students. For example, more able students are entered early for GCSE in English and mathematics and some Year 11 students obtain qualifications in ICT normally attained post-16. Additional time allocated to the core subjects is paying dividends in improved performance by the time students leave school.

Less academic students are catered for effectively. On entry to school there is a high quality nurture provision that makes their transition smooth. For older students a much improved and well coordinated programme exists including work placements. Work experience for all students is good and is enhanced by thorough preparation in personal, social and health education including mock interviews from employers. Extra-curricular and extended schools provision is strong. Enrichment overall is outstanding, particularly around the specialist schools' dimension with many different language clubs including Italian and Chinese.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding promoting good personal development and achievement at the school. The arrangements put in place for safeguarding are exemplary, and health and safety procedures are good, ensuring that students are safe in school. The imaginative steps taken to reduce absence are extensive and effective, resulting in improved attendance. There have been no permanent exclusions for two years and the school is rightly focusing on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions.

As a result of the effectiveness of the inclusion team working in partnership with external agencies and parents/carers, the provision for vulnerable students including looked-after children and students new to the country is outstanding. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who attend regularly make good progress. The tracking of students' progress is thorough, regular and rigorous. Students receive high quality information, advice and guidance enabling many to make very informed choices about their future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The senior leadership team have a clear vision for the school which is communicated very effectively to all staff. The move to the new building has been managed very well by the headteacher and senior leadership team. Staff worked very hard to ensure that students' progress was not adversely affected by the move and the success of their strategies can be seen in the continuing upward trend in standards.

The new building and the facilities it contains are of high quality and create a positive learning environment.

The school's self-evaluation involves staff at all levels, is very detailed and shows an awareness of strengths and areas for development. Some departments and areas are further developed than others at self-evaluation and critical analysis of information. The performance management system is rigorous and linked well into other quality assurance systems and continuous professional development. The school has used workforce reforms very effectively to develop their pastoral system and the positive impact of these changes can already be seen. There is good use of data for tracking students' progress. A wide range of data sources are used to set targets and these are monitored and reviewed regularly.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. The impact of specialist status has been very positive here, with the school developing numerous productive links locally, nationally and internationally. These have helped develop students' understanding of different communities and value diversity. The school works very well with a wide range of partners. There are harmonious relationships between students and staff with in the school. The governors support the school well and provide effective challenge and support to the headteacher. They have a sound understanding of the school and its priorities for development.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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?	1

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for all of the help you gave to the inspectors when we were at your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing the work you were doing. As well as looking at your work we read the questionnaires completed by your parents; they were most helpful.

We think Meadowhead is a good school with some outstanding features. You are making good progress and reach standards that are above average at the end of your time at the school. The school provides you with the skills you need to do well when you leave. Your personal development is good, you enjoy coming to school, feel safe and have an excellent understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle. The new building has had a very positive effect on the school. Many of you enjoy making a helpful contribution to the life of the school, the local and the wider community. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is good and improving. You really appreciate all the excellent enrichment activities on offer. The care, guidance and support that the school gives you are excellent. The leaders and managers of the school have a clear idea of what the school needs to do to improve further and are working hard on these areas. The main areas are:

- making sure you are more actively involved in your learning and develop independent learning skills
- continuing to improve the progress you make throughout the school.

Your school has improved in many ways since the last inspection and with your support can continue to make good progress in the future.