

# Meadowbrook College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133776
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328763
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Nolan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	136
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Kate Curtis (interim chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andrew Creese
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	The Harlow Centre Raymund Road Old Marston Oxford OX3 0PG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 253198
<b>Fax number</b>	01865 253199

<b>Age group</b>	5–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Meadowbrook College provides for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or who are at risk of exclusion, mainly because of behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The college also caters for looked after children who have no other educational provision. The range of support includes a rapid response and reintegration short-term programme, a 20-day service for up to 12 pupils at Key Stage 3, and a full-time individualised alternative curriculum for up to 84 pupils in Years 10 and 11. Vocational courses are offered to mainstream and special school pupils as well as to those from the college. The work of the college, managed centrally from The Harlow Centre, is spread across four sites, the most distant being 25 miles away.

The college serves pupils from across the county and the vast majority are from White British backgrounds. A much higher than average proportion of the pupils is eligible for free school meals. A similarly high proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational need. Many are vulnerable young people, already known to the social services. Boys outnumber girls in all year groups. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils under secondary school age on the school roll. The college has been accredited with the Sports Award and National Healthy School Status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Meadowbrook College is a good school that prides itself on giving pupils of all ages 'a fresh start to learning'. Its success is recognised by those parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire. 'Meadowbrook attends to my son's needs in all sorts of ways.' This evaluation of its work matches that of the college itself and of inspectors.

The college's greatest successes lie in improving personal and social skills, in finding vocational areas within the good curriculum to re-engage pupils in Years 10 and 11 in gaining qualifications, and in effectively reintegrating pupils in Years 7 to 9 into mainstream schools. This it accomplishes through good care, guidance and support that include outstanding personal guidance. Meadowbrook is an excellent ambassador for its pupils, working very closely with businesses and a wide range of other external agencies to ensure pupils' safety and smooth transitions to employment and further training.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Their rapid progress in social skills and their growing understanding of moral issues and responsible citizenship is reflected in the effective circle time, the college council and in their contributions to the wider community. Pupils are able to listen to each other and make sensible interventions in discussions, for example. They have also involved themselves in raising funds for charities through their art sales and other events which they manage. They are rightly proud of their sports coaching with local primary schools. Most show an informed understanding of health and safety issues and many participate successfully in the college's attempts to improve fitness and help them eat well.

Most pupils make giant strides in improving their attendance from their points of entry to the college. However, pupils' overall attendance is not yet as good as it should be and there is more to do to raise this above the current 82%. As pupils' confidence increases and they develop positive relationships with the many staff supporting them, they begin to appreciate that learning is important. The cumulative effect of good teaching and learning in the vocational areas, together with at least satisfactory teaching in the key skills, prepares pupils successfully for their future economic well-being. Nevertheless, under the good leadership of the headteacher and his senior team, the college has realised that it can help its students even more by improving the rate of their academic progress. Although many more pupils than previously leave Meadowbrook with recognised qualifications in both English and mathematics, standards in both of these areas remain below average. Only occasionally are GCSE grades above Grade D, even if for most pupils this represents good progress given the ground they have to make up. To improve pupils' academic success even more, the college acknowledges that it must develop further its current systems for checking on the pupils' academic progress so that staff and pupils are better informed on what could be achieved. Some team leaders, too, are not yet skilled enough in improving academic success rates through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their areas.

Meadowbrook is well supported by the local authority which has reconstituted the management committee so that it is ably led by a recently appointed chairperson. It is well poised to challenge the college to play an even more effective part in supporting the inclusion of the county's vulnerable pupils.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Intensify efforts to raise pupils' attendance.

- Develop further the current systems for checking pupils' academic progress so that both staff and pupils aspire to gain even higher qualifications.
- Rapidly extend the skills of all team leaders so that they are fully accountable for the work of their areas.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good although overall standards remain below average. Pupils make good progress because of the individual attention they receive.

When pupils join Meadowbrook, the attainment of most is well below average because of gaps in their learning caused by challenging histories and disrupted schooling. Those pupils who complete Years 10 and 11 at the college achieve well, making good gains in basic skills, particularly in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Since the last inspection there have been considerable improvements in the proportion of Year 11 students gaining both English and mathematics qualifications. In 2008 three quarters of these pupils achieved GCSE or equivalent accreditation in both subjects, mainly at Grades D to G. Pupils also achieved well in a wide range of vocational courses, including construction and beauty and hairdressing.

College records show that those pupils currently on roll are also achieving well with 90% on track to reach their targets in both English and mathematics. Those with a statement of special educational need make good progress towards their personal, behavioural and social targets. Their increasingly positive attitudes to learning allow them to make up lost ground in literacy and numeracy. Girls and boys achieve similarly well, although in some year groups girls do less well in mathematics than boys. Some pupils who are looked after children make slower progress than other groups but generally achieve at least satisfactorily. In Years 7 to 9 most pupils on the short-stay pathways make rapid progress in addressing the challenging personal targets in their individual learning plans. As a result of their raised confidence and self-esteem, they are able more readily to overcome previous barriers to learning, improve their skills, and successfully reintegrate into mainstream schools.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Despite its overall satisfactory quality, pupils make good progress in their personal development, often from a low base. Their social and moral development is good and their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is mostly satisfactory. Pupils know clearly what is expected of them, even if they find it difficult to conform at times. Most understand that staff care and are there to help them. As a result, they form warm and trusting relationships with adults. They are generally courteous towards visitors and in their dealings with each other. A Year 8 pupil volunteered that 'staff here are really nice and look after us well'.

The attendance of the vast majority of students improves the longer they are at the college. Nevertheless, it is still lower than it should be despite pupils' clear enjoyment of the programmes on offer. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe and live healthily, even though they do not always choose to do so. Some make a very positive contribution to the college through their involvement in decision-making. For example, they made much-valued suggestions for the new college logo. In the local community pupils act as football coaches for the local primary school, collaborate

in arts events within the area and support the 'Marston Meadows' development. The strong emphasis on basic skills and vocational opportunities enables pupils to adopt positive attitudes to future work and prepare well for further training and education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils learn well because of good teaching. Staff are especially effective in creating a positive learning environment so that pupils concentrate in lessons and are pleased with their success. Excellent working relationships with pupils based on teachers' sensitive understanding of the individual's needs underpin the most successful lessons. Praise and encouragement are well used to sustain pupils' efforts so that they persevere with tasks, as in a mathematics revision lesson for Year 11 and in a bricklaying class for Years 10 and 11. In the latter, the pupils worked to a tight time schedule very diligently despite the difficulties of preparing bricks for reuse, determined to support the team effort. Despite these good features, however, there are still some lessons where work does not build well enough on pupils' earlier learning and feedback to pupils on written work does not always show them how to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well tailored to pupils' interests and needs. For Years 10 and 11, the strong vocational thrust is complemented effectively by opportunities to improve basic skills in English, mathematics and ICT. There is a strong emphasis on personal and social education, on careers guidance and work-related learning. Excellent partnerships with business and industry offer pupils many practical opportunities to gain qualifications and experience enterprise activities. The curriculum is enriched exceptionally well by visits, visitors and excursions, including residential trips. The copiera class is a clear favourite with pupils in Years 7 to 9 and contributes well to their fitness and well-being.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Personal guidance is outstanding. Counselling, well-considered individual learning plans, targets and frequent reviews support the pupils' personal development well. Excellent links with a wide range of agencies together with the expertise within the college, managed through pupils' key workers, ensure pupils receive the support they need. Non-attendance is carefully followed up and there are plans to improve pupils' attendance through, for example, collecting them from home when necessary. Pupils are taught effectively how to stay safe and manage their feelings. They also receive good guidance on the pathways open to them both during and after college. Parents recognise that their young people are well cared for. 'Everyone at Meadowbrook College has the pupils' best interest at heart', commented a parent.

Information on pupils' attainment and progress against baseline information is recorded centrally at regular intervals. However, these checks are not yet frequent enough and the information collected is not fully coordinated. As a result, checks on pupils' progress are not always related well enough to their starting points and teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment are sometimes lower than might be expected.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The impact of the good senior leadership and management at Meadowbrook is evident in the improvements since the last inspection. There has been an appreciable rise in the proportion of students gaining accreditation in English and mathematics. Fixed-term exclusions have decreased dramatically so that there have been only two this academic year. Vocational elements in the curriculum have developed well and although pupils' attendance is still too low, most come to school more regularly than previously. The college has sustained a high rate of reintegration of its pupils into mainstream schools. Meadowbrook has clearly demonstrated its good capacity to improve further.

The dedicated leadership of the headteacher, together with the restructured senior team, has developed a clear sense of teamwork across all sites and has promoted a truly inclusive ethos that allows vulnerable pupils to thrive. There is greater consistency in the quality of the work of each site than at the last inspection. Through well-designed training activities, the headteacher has succeeded in rebalancing teachers' perceptions of the work of the unit. There is a growing understanding that the pupils can make fast progress not only in their personal development but also in academic work. All staff are supported well in improving their classroom practice and in understanding the requirements of external examinations. This shows that the school's self-evaluation is having a good impact. Nevertheless, the role of specialist subject and team leaders is not developed well enough to monitor and evaluate the work of their areas to best effect. Senior managers also recognise the importance of using assessment information better, so that pupils' progress can be checked more readily against realistic but challenging targets. Although the college is at the early stages of evaluating the impact of its work to support community cohesion, it has a clear understanding of its place within the local and wider community. It not only works with, but also initiates, a range of joint ventures with local schools and residents.

Members of the recently changed management committee are determined not only to continue to support the college well but also to challenge it where necessary. The college liaises exceptionally well with a wide range of outside agencies to get the best for its students. Parents are very appreciative of the regular contact. 'Staff make every effort to keep in touch', noted several parents.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	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	3
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**

13 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meadowbrook College, Oxford, OX3 0PG

Thank you for welcoming us to Meadowbrook College. We enjoyed sharing time with you, listening to your views, and seeing how secure you feel in school. Many of you greeted us very courteously and were obviously happy to belong to the college. We know that both you and your parents appreciate how well staff look after you. For most of you the best thing about Meadowbrook is that you 'are cared for as an individual'.

You think that Meadowbrook is a good college and we agree with you. Many of you are making good progress because your teachers make sure that work interests you and you can see it leads to worthwhile jobs or future training. Because of the high quality of individual guidance and support you receive, you make good strides in your personal development. Your social skills improve and you learn to assume responsibility for your actions. High numbers of you gain accreditation in your chosen areas and in English and mathematics because of good teaching. You are very fortunate to have access to such a wide range of vocational courses.

Your very committed headteacher and staff never stop trying to make Meadowbrook College an ever better place to be. To help them do this, we have asked them to work even harder at helping you improve your attendance. We would also like to see the college make even better use of the information they gather on your progress to help you reach higher grades in examinations. Meadowbrook also intends to develop further the skills of staff in charge of subjects and important areas of the college.

We hope you will continue to make the most of the opportunities you have at the college. Some of you really do need to attend much more regularly so that you do not miss important steps in your learning.

We wish you every success for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector