

# Meadowfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134783
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	328982
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Farrell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	189
Sixth form	36
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Watson
<b>Principal</b>	Philip Rankin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Swanstree Avenue Sittingbourne ME10 4NL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01795 477788
<b>Fax number</b>	01795 477771

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<b>Age group</b>	4–19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Meadowfield School educates pupils with a range of disorders and disabilities, including severe or profound learning difficulties and autism, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. Nearly all pupils are White British. Eighteen pupils are looked after by the local authority. Formerly, the school was on three sites and after a protracted period of rebuilding and transferring pupils, all are now educated on one site. This was finally achieved only a few days before the inspection took place.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Meadowfield is a good school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive, typically saying, 'Meadowfield is the best school for my child and has done wonders.' Partnerships with other agencies and community resources are excellent. The good leadership and management have outstanding elements. The school's transition to a single site has been exceptionally smooth because it has been handled so skilfully. The school's sense of direction is extremely clear and staff work together very closely. Good school self-evaluation and development planning are closely related to good management of staff performance and their support and training. Governors support and challenge the school well and physical resources are effectively used.

The school's caring ethos and very close partnership with others lead to excellent care, guidance and support, sustaining pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Pupils feel safe because they trust staff and structures to protect pupils and keep them safe are strong. Risk assessments are very thorough and staff backgrounds checked to help ensure pupils' safety. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent because the curriculum and school ethos support it exceptionally well. Pupils enjoy exercise and know about eating healthily. They enjoy their learning enormously and therefore attend school regularly. Because the school manages and encourages pupils' behaviour so well, it is outstanding. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community because the school is very outward looking. They develop good economic understanding and skills because of good progress in literacy and numeracy and very good opportunities, such as mini-enterprise activities. Support for pupils contributes to their good progress in learning. A wide range of information is used to check pupils' progress and focus support for them. However, the school makes limited use of assessment data from beyond the school to identify where pupils can do even better, enabling support to be refined to further enhance progress.

The excellent curriculum provides a rich variety of activities, contributing effectively to pupils' learning and personal development. Visits, visitors, very full use of the community, college links and work experience contribute considerably. Good teaching and learning are typified by very strong relationships between pupils and staff and work well planned according to pupils' different learning requirements. Behaviour management is very effective. Physical learning resources are used well and lessons well structured. However, teachers do not always deploy teaching assistants to best effect and sometimes pupils are given too much help so progress is slowed. Pupils' attainment is exceptionally low because of their special educational needs. However, good teaching enables pupils to make good progress throughout the school. They try hard and greatly enjoy lessons. Pupils reach challenging targets for learning and older pupils take a good range of suitable examinations.

The good Early Years Foundation Stage includes excellent support for children's welfare, leading to excellent personal development, and the good learning environment enables good progress. In the good sixth form, an adult ethos, very high expectations and excellent care, guidance and support ensure students' excellent personal development. Good teaching and learning enable students to make good progress and the range of examinations motivates students well. The school's capacity to improve is excellent because it has improved provision in a long, demanding period of transition and can now concentrate on further improvements.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

In the well-led and -managed sixth form, clear direction and commitment to improve enable strengths to be built upon. Excellent care, guidance and support, with particular strengths in care, lead to students' outstanding personal and social development. Students' behaviour is outstanding and they are courteous and thoughtful because the staff expect adult behaviour of students. The good curriculum, with strong college links and growing emphasis on life skills, supports good teaching and learning. The provision enables students, including those with different types of disabilities and disorders, to make good progress and achieve a good range of suitable accreditation. Lessons are well structured and often touched with humour, in which students delight, and relationships are very strong. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to ensure activities are relevant to everyday life and to deploy teaching assistants fully when the teacher speaks to the whole class.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Good, well-organised leadership and management create a warm, safe and purposeful learning environment in which children thrive. Excellent relationships and enthusiastic encouragement fostering children's self-confidence and independence lead to outstanding personal and social development. High levels of support promote children's feelings of safety and well-being. Skilfully organised sessions using stimulating and engaging resources lead to children progressing well in their learning. For example, in a lively session, labelled bottles and number rhymes helped children successfully explore subtraction. Activities are well matched to what the children enjoy and can achieve. The provision recognises the importance of building on links with parents, including engaging them in practical activities to enhance and enrich children's learning and development.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure teachers deploy teaching assistants fully during whole-class teaching and make sure staff do not help pupils too much.
- Use data from beyond the school to evaluate the effectiveness of provision against that of other schools nationally and identify where support should be focused to raise standards further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' attainments are exceptionally low because of their special educational needs. However, pupils make good progress in all phases of their schooling. Pupils with different types of disabilities and disorders, such as profound learning difficulties and autism, make good progress because the curriculum and teaching and learning methods are well suited to their learning requirements. There are no unexplained discrepancies in the progress of other groups, including boys and girls and children looked after by the local authority. The school sets good, suitably challenging targets, which pupils meet. The range and type of accreditation offered are well matched to pupils' earlier levels of progress and the school is constantly seeking further examinations and assessments to recognise and celebrate what pupils can do.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, particularly moral and social development. Pupils enjoy exercise and participate fully in sporting activities and local tournaments. They are aware of healthy eating even when they do not always comply. They know about the importance of safety and how to keep safe. They delight in their school and greatly enjoy all it offers, saying, 'We learn new things and have made good friends' and, reflecting the keen humour in lessons, 'The teachers make us laugh.' Pupils attend regularly because the school successfully promotes and rewards good attendance. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding because staff maintain very high expectations and are excellent role models of courtesy and respect. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community, for example through active membership of the schools council and very active participation in community projects. Good economic well-being is promoted through the very strong contribution of college links and work placements and the good contribution of literacy, numeracy and computer skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding but overall teaching and learning are good throughout the school and sixth form. Among strengths of teaching and learning are warm and trusting relationships, activities that are well planned for different pupils, excellent management of behaviour and high expectations of conduct, good use of physical learning resources, and a very strong contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. Teaching assistants work very hard and make a valuable contribution to the good progress pupils make. However, teachers do not always deploy them as well as they should, particularly in parts of lessons where the teacher is talking to the whole class, and staff sometimes help pupils too much. Both these factors slow pupils' progress in such lessons.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The rich and diverse curriculum meets statutory requirements and extremely effectively promotes pupils' excellent personal development and their good academic progress. It very successfully helps pupils develop life skills because it concentrates strongly on these. The curriculum fosters excellent community links and contributes very significantly to pupils' great enjoyment of their schooling. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to participate in practical activities, such as gardening, charitable projects, educational trips and community sporting events that provide richly meaningful learning opportunities. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide variety of activities, such as visiting African dancers and other opportunities to participate in music and drama. Excellent links with the community enable the school to offer mini-enterprise work and very successful work placements, equally valued by the school and the places of work.

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

#### **Grade: 1**

Staff provide excellent care, guidance and support, which is particularly strong in care aspects. High levels of staff support for academic guidance help ensure pupils make good progress in

lessons and the excellent ethos and care lead to pupils' exemplary personal development. The school complies with statutory requirements for checking staff backgrounds and keeping pupils safe. Risks are very carefully assessed and systems for minimising them closely followed. Comprehensive medical and behaviour plans are consistently implemented very successfully, promoting health and safety. An excellent network of contacts and very strong systems encourage close partnerships with parents, external agencies and others in the community to help very effectively meet pupils' diverse needs. Pupils' regular attendance is very well encouraged and rewarded. Well-coordinated exchanges of information between the school and other agencies help the school's very effective planning to support pupils. Very well-established arrangements for transition assist pupils' move to new challenges. The school effectively uses a wide range of information on pupils' progress to target support but does not refer enough to assessment data from other schools nationally to identify where standards could be even higher and refine support accordingly.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's leadership and management have worked tirelessly to ensure the protracted processes of moving the school to one site has been accomplished smoothly. An excellent sense of direction binds staff into a cohesive, highly motivated team. Community cohesion is outstandingly promoted and scrupulously evaluated. The school's good self-evaluation processes effectively knit together the good development plan, performance management and staff training. The process enables the school to set clear, relevant targets for improvement. Equal opportunities are well promoted and resources for learning well used. Governors are formally linked to specific curriculum areas, enabling them to be more focused in their effective challenge and support. Administrative staff have made a valuable contribution to ensuring the smooth transfer of information and procedures to the single school site. The school recognises the importance of improving teaching and learning and refining its use of assessment data.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2	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>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
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 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	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**

12 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meadowfield School, Sittingbourne ME10 4NL

Thank you for helping me and my colleague when we inspected your school recently. It was wonderful to speak with you and learn about your school.

We found many excellent and good things about Meadowfield. The school is well led and managed and staff work excellently together. Your behaviour is excellent and you are very polite and hard working. The activities the school provides are outstanding and the support and care you receive are first rate. The teaching is good and so you learn well. The provision for the youngest children and for the sixth form is good. You told us very clearly how much you enjoyed school.

There are two things the school could do even better so I have asked that:

- teachers make sure all adults in the room are always clear about what they have to do and staff do not help you too much when you can try things on your own
- staff compare how well you are doing with what pupils achieve in other schools to see if they can stretch you even more.

I know you are delighted now everybody in the school is together on one site and you will continue to work very hard.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Farrell Lead inspector