

The Meadows Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112958
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	338059
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Pam Haezwindt 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 of pupils on the school roll	645
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Poole
Headteacher	Lynn Asquith
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2007
School address	High Street Old Whittington Chesterfield
Telephone number	01246 450825
Fax number	01246 456014
Email address	la@meadows.derbyshire.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 30 lessons, taught by 27 teachers and held meetings with groups of students, staff, governors and a carer. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including policies, improvement plans, attainment data, monitoring information, governing body minutes and some students' work. There were 52 completed parent and carer questionnaires, which were analysed, as were questionnaires from students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail for:

- improvement in the attainment and achievement in English and mathematics, including current progress in lessons
- well planned, challenging teaching in all subjects which enables all groups and individuals to make good progress
- supportive assessment, including marking, which helps students to improve their work
- strong leadership at all levels which is capable of improving outcomes and the school overall.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school, with numbers on roll falling over the past three years. Its population is mostly White British with approximately four per cent of students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is over twice the national average. There is provision for hearing impaired students in mainstream classes through specialist support and enhanced resources. The school has recently been removed from National Challenge requirements. It is a member of the Chesterfield Learning Community, developing courses for the school and community. The school has gained the intermediate International Schools Award and is working towards the full award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The Meadows provides a satisfactory standard of education. Some aspects of provision, such as the curriculum and care, guidance and support are good. There has been steady improvement in attainment since the last inspection, although it is still well below average in terms of students gaining more than five A*-C grades in GCSE, both overall, and including English and mathematics. However, the vast majority of students leave school with accreditation which will help them in their future lives such as five or more A*-G grades in GCSE, vocational or entry level certificates. One parent wrote: 'Overall I am happy with the school and both my children are doing very well'. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to effective care, guidance and support.

Students feel safe and any bullying is dealt with swiftly. Behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and sometimes better, especially in Key Stage 4 where students have chosen their subjects and are more motivated. The school is calm during break and lunch times. Some staff and parents expressed concern about behaviour not being dealt with well enough. However, there was no evidence of this during the inspection and systems are robust. Many students know how to be healthy. They are beginning to contribute well to the community in different ways. Attendance is now satisfactory.

The school leadership team has improved the way assessment data is collected, analysed and used through the Going Green system. This means that specific groups of students are targeted for support and intervention strategies, and this is beginning to have an effect on progress and attainment. The system is also used to provide information to parents once a term so that they know what their child is doing well at and where she or he needs to improve. This is a good system but it is not being used systematically in classrooms by all teachers to plan lessons according to needs. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. There are good lessons which are challenging and cater to students' different abilities, and include a range of activities, group and independent work. However, too many lessons are dull, dominated by the teacher and aimed at the whole class. There is inconsistency across departments. This affects adversely the progress some students make.

Despite working on improvements which are making a difference to outcomes, and having good aims for the school, the school leadership team and the governing body have not conveyed their vision for improvement to staff, students or parents and carers clearly enough. It is also the case that the strategic roles and responsibilities of some members of the senior leadership team are not clear, and more time is needed for some, for example, teaching and learning, to develop them. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase progress and attainment through improving teaching, learning and assessment
 - using the Going Green' assessment data consistently to plan lessons to cater for all abilities
 - ensuring plans for lessons are detailed enough and include how learning outcomes will be met
 - improving challenge and pace, questioning techniques and the range of learning activities in lessons
 - ensuring assessment opportunities are built into lessons.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management to ensure:
 - better communication to staff, students, parents or carers of the school's vision for improvement
 - clarity about strategic roles and responsibilities
 - more time for some staff to carry out their responsibilities.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with below average attainment and a majority have reading ages well below expectations. Most students make satisfactory progress throughout their time at The Meadows and the minority of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The school now works with its cluster of primary schools, and its own young learners, using new reading resources to improve the reading deficit in both phases. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well below average but improving steadily. An increase in attainment in 2010 based on secure tracking is predicted. Attainment in English was not as good as in mathematics in the past. The school has invested in improvements which are making a difference, for example: resources in mathematics; consulting and visiting other schools for English. The school has put in various measures to increase both girls' and boys' attainment including projects for targeted groups to improve aspirations. Overall, students make satisfactory progress in lessons. Where teaching is good or better and students are motivated, they make good progress.

Students know who to go to if they have a problem in school. They are also properly aware of the dangers the Internet could pose. Hearing impaired students feel safe because specialist staff give them confidence. Communication through sign language, where needed, is fluent and regular. Lower down the school, attitudes to learning are sometimes immature and behaviour relies too much on teacher direction. Many students choose to participate in sport beyond the school day and they recognise the essentials

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of a healthy diet. Some students are involved in growing fruit and vegetables on site to be cooked and eaten in school.

Students contribute to the school community in various ways, for example, as guides on open evenings and through recycling. The 'school evaluators' contribute to the school community but currently lack good organisational skills as representatives of their peers. Sports junior leaders make a good contribution to the community with their work in primary schools. The recent development of various gardens in the community, fundraising for charities far and wide and the involvement of some students in the links with Ghana, Nepal and Palestine have all added to the extent to which students contribute to their own and wider communities.

Workplace skills are developing as attainment improves. Many students have good information and communication technology skills, are taking examinations early in Year 9 and developing their skills further in Years 10 and 11. Very few students do not enter employment, further education or training at 16. Students are reflective following visits to thought-provoking places such as the Holocaust Museum, a mosque and gurdwara. Most have a well developed sense of right and wrong and act considerately towards others in school. They are beginning to have a good understanding of the priorities and cultural differences of peoples from different parts of the world and leading successful events such as the recent African event which was very well attended by the school and wider community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and there are good working relationships in most lessons. Technology is used to support teaching and learning well and additional staff are generally well deployed. The quality of planning varies greatly from lesson to lesson. Assessment is not embedded effectively in planning, teaching and learning in many lessons, nor is it sufficiently consistent across departments to ensure all students make good progress. Marking is variable.

The curriculum is well designed and modified to meet the needs of individual students. In Key Stage 3, there is early entry for some students, where appropriate, to GCSE information and communications technology, science and modern languages. This boosts esteem for these students and provides good practice for later examinations. The outcomes in these early entries are for the most part good. However, there is too little personal, social and health education in Key Stage 3, and tutorial time in both key stages is not well used to boost either curriculum provision or outcomes. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is enriched through the school's partnership with the local learning community and its development of Diploma courses. Hence, there is a good range of vocational subjects including horticulture and construction in the extensive facilities on site. Cross-curricular provision in information and communications technology and literacy is good. There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities with good take-up. There is effective deployment of sufficient learning support and communication support workers to support the high proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The student support base is used effectively. There are good support strategies for improving attendance. Gifted and talented students are identified in Year 7 and there is a range of strategies to support and develop their achievement. However, work in lessons is not always planned to enable high attaining students to reach their potential. There is very good induction for newcomers to the school. Good advice and guidance is provided when students have to choose options for their courses. For students who are about to leave, there is excellent use of the careers service to provide them with advice. Exemplary records are kept of students whose circumstances put them at risk and there is very good communication with parents and carers. However, the link between pastoral care and academic guidance is not strong enough.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders and the governing body have worked effectively under the challenging circumstances of a reduced budget, where redundancies have had to be made to ensure the school runs smoothly. School leaders have a good knowledge of the school and have evaluated it carefully. Therefore, for the most part, they know what they need to do to improve the school, although attainment targets are insufficiently challenging. Leaders have made improvements to data management and its use, to the curriculum, and have invested in resources for improvement. They have also raised the school's profile in the community, for example, through students' gardening. There are robust systems for managing teaching and learning, but despite senior leaders' evaluations of teaching and learning matching those of inspectors during joint lesson observations, these are not yet securing enough good or better teaching, learning and assessment, including marking. The governing body carries out many of its responsibilities well, both supporting and challenging the school. However, it is not yet influencing sufficiently the strategic direction of the school, nor communicating enough with staff, students, parents or carers.

Engagement with parents or carers is improving with a range of ways which are increasingly effective, such as text messaging, and the new m-portal provides the potential to make further improvements. School leaders are also putting on special evenings to liaise with parents such as the recent mathematics, and information and communications technology evenings. Partnerships are plentiful and effective in supporting students' well-being, broadening the curriculum, developing teachers' skills, and promoting community cohesion. The school is well on track with promoting community cohesion, having a policy, an audit and a number of links in train both at home and abroad. Students are involved but not able to articulate well what it means. The school is inclusive. It ensures that the large number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are welcomed, cared for very well and make good progress. The school has good safeguarding measures in place including very good child protection training for all staff and well-written regularly reviewed policies. Resources are deployed to achieve satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers agree that the school keeps their child safe and that they are kept informed of their child's progress. Most also say that their child enjoys school. The large majority are in agreement with the rest of the statements on the questionnaire. Despite this, a small minority express concern about whether their child is making sufficient progress and whether behaviour is dealt with well enough. A small minority are also concerned that their suggestions and concerns are not taken into account. However, one parent made a point of writing: 'On the few times I have been into school over different issues, I have always been listened to and had a positive outcome'. Inspectors judge progress to be satisfactory overall and good for some groups of students. They also judge that behaviour is dealt with satisfactorily and there are robust systems for doing so. The school knows that it needs to improve communications with parents or carers and is making efforts to do so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Meadows Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 645 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	40	23	43	5	9	2	4
The school keeps my child safe	21	40	25	47	4	8	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	55	17	32	7	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	34	21	40	10	19	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	12	23	26	49	10	19	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	19	31	58	8	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	17	31	58	5	9	3	6
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	25	29	55	6	11	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	25	28	53	8	15	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	21	26	49	7	13	5	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	23	22	42	11	21	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	13	25	24	45	9	17	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	35	22	42	5	10	2	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Meadows Community School, Chesterfield, S41 9LG

I am writing on behalf the inspection team from last week to thank you for your help in discussions and around the school. You were friendly and courteous.

Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education and some aspects of the school's provision are good. You have a broad and flexible curriculum which enables you to take a variety of courses and gain different accreditations. Some of you can enter different GCSEs early which helps you to get on quickly. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school cares for you and supports you well, and if you have any difficulties you know who to go to.

Overall, the school's results in gaining 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE are low but you are making satisfactory progress and some of you make good progress. You know how to keep healthy, although many of you still prefer less healthy meals. You contribute well to the school and wider community and are beginning to develop a good understanding of spiritual, social, moral and cultural issues. Your attendance is now average. Your behaviour is satisfactory and quite often good, particularly where you are interested in your lessons. However, lessons do not always engage you well.

We have asked the school to:

- improve teaching, learning and assessment so that as many of your lessons as possible are good or better and you make good progress in all of them
- improve the way it communicates its vision for improvement to you; ensure that the roles of all key staff are made clear; and provide more time for some key staff to develop their responsibilities, for example, for teaching, learning and assessment.

We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt

Her Majesty's Inspector

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