

Serco Inspections  
Boundary House  
2 Wythall Green Way  
Middle Lane  
BIRMINGHAM  
West Midlands  
B47 6LW

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

T 0121 683 2347  
amelia.baker@serco.com



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Mr Christian Williams  
Headteacher  
The Meadows School  
Springfield Road  
Leek  
ST13 6EU

Dear Mr Williams

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on Wednesday 28 April 2010, for the time you and Mrs Wright gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks on to all the pupils, the two governors who met with me and the headteacher and chair of governors of Leek High School.

Since the previous inspection the school's context has changed significantly. In March 2009 the school moved from its temporary building into its purpose built new accommodation which is co-located with Leek High School. Since September 2009, 27 students with severe learning difficulties and complex needs have joined from the neighbouring special school. This has transformed the Meadows from an all-age school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties into a secondary special school catering for pupils with a wide range of needs.

As a result of the inspection on 21 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that assessment data on pupils' performance are used consistently across the school to inform planning for pupils' learning
- make proper arrangements to accredit pupils' learning through external agencies at the end of Key Stage 4
- complete development work to adapt the curriculum to meet the full range of needs in the school's changing population
- ensure that pupils are actively involved in the target setting process.



Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

A great deal of the school's time and energy since the previous inspection has been taken up by the exciting yet inevitably challenging move to the new site, and the inclusion of a range of new pupils. The headteacher, well supported by senior leaders, has managed this series of complex transitions very effectively. He has given very careful thought to the design and practicalities of the new school. As a result the accommodation is of very good quality and supports learning well. Excellent partnership working between the Meadows and Leek High has enabled some truly inclusive work to begin to emerge, such as the shared sports and outdoor activities lessons. Governors from both schools have been active and supportive during the development of this partnership. Staff have responded well to the opportunities which the new arrangements bring. The Meadows pupils have settled into their new environment well and speak positively about the move.

Good planning for the transition of the significant number of new pupils, all of whom have complex needs, has enabled them quickly to become settled and calm in their new school. Their curriculum is enriched by specialist facilities within the school, such as the sensory room, as well as the use of facilities at the college, high school and nearby special school. During the inspection, a group of pupils was observed enjoying their pottery lesson which is led each week by a college tutor. Good attention has been paid to training staff to understand the needs of this group, for example the range of ways in which the pupils communicate. Leaders have rightly identified that this needs to continue. For example, a few staff are competent in using Makaton signing, but this is not yet sufficiently widespread.

The headteacher has rightly recognised that the school's previous assessment system did not provide a precise enough overview of pupils' achievement. As a result, the school is in the process of introducing a new assessment method and a well-designed system for tracking pupils' progress on a termly basis. Sensibly, the school is using new national data to set aspirational targets for each pupil. Despite this transitional phase in assessment systems, the school has a range of evidence to show that pupils are making at least satisfactory and often good progress across the curriculum and in their personal and social development. A scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of lessons during the inspection confirmed the school's judgement.

The school has introduced appropriate accreditation for Key Stage 4 English and mathematics courses. Pupils are rising to the new challenge of presenting coursework to be externally assessed and they demonstrate great pride in their achievements. In an outstanding Year 10 English lesson, pupils were able to recite confidently a range of quotations from Romeo and Juliet, demonstrating a clear understanding of key events and relationships between the characters. Other aspects of pupils' work are accredited through college courses. The school is aiming



to apply for specialist sports college status, part of which would involve accrediting pupils' many achievements in sport.

The governing body has worked hard to support the move into the new building. Thorough support is provided in specific areas such as finance. A committee of governors is aware of pupils' progress but the full governing body is not as well informed about this crucial aspect. Importantly, the headteacher is to explain the new assessment and tracking system to them in their imminent meeting.

The local authority and School Improvement Partner have provided the school with appropriate support and challenge during this transition phase. More support for both the school and the governing body is planned for the summer term.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King  
Her Majesty's Inspector