

Meadows School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119029
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313160
Inspection dates	23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Newmark
Headteacher	Mike Price
Date of previous school inspection	19–22 January 2004
School address	London Road Southborough Tunbridge Wells TN4 0RJ
Telephone number	01892 529144
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, school documentation and assessment information. This inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the procedures for evaluating pupils' progress and achievements and for comparing the relative performance of different groups and different subjects; the use of assessment data in setting challenging targets for pupils; and the extent to which lesson activities interest, motivate and challenge all pupils, even when there is a very wide range of ability within the class. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is owned by the Barnardo's Children's Charity. It provides education for pupils who have experienced significant difficulties in their previous schools because of their very challenging behaviour. Therefore, all pupils have a statement of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A high number are in public care. The school has a residential facility and so the school takes pupils from a number of local authorities in London and the south-east of England. Approximately half of pupils are boarders. Virtually all pupils have a White British background and the large majority are boys.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Meadows School transforms the lives of its pupils through the good quality education that it provides and its highly effective focus on developing their personal skills. Strong and focused leadership has established a clear purpose for the school and an acute understanding amongst the staff as to how they can best meet pupils' many and varied needs. Boarders benefit greatly from the exceptionally good residential provision that consolidates and extends their learning, academic progress and personal development. Parents' and carers' wholehearted support of the school is evident in statements such as, 'This move is the best thing that ever happened to my son' and 'My daughter has progressed so much since being at Meadows. Can't praise it enough.'

The vast majority of pupils have experienced a sense of failure in their schools before transferring to Meadows. They have a history of disrupted education caused by their challenging behaviour, non-attendance and frequent exclusions. The school is extremely effective in helping pupils to overcome their low self-esteem and other negative feelings and to re-engage with education. This is possible because pupils realise that they have been given another chance to achieve success and so they get a grip of their lives. Pupils recognise and appreciate the school's work. Comments like, 'The school has helped me to put my life together', 'I now think before I speak' and 'The school has helped me to deal with things' are typical of their views. Therefore, although standards are significantly below those expected of pupils of similar age, pupils make good progress even though very few of them join the school in Year 7. The basis of pupils' good achievements is their outstanding personal development. This results from the school's meticulous systems for monitoring pupils' behaviour and the way the staff use this information to target support and guidance. As a result, pupils' improved attendance, excellent behaviour and positive attitudes put them in a very good position to learn and to live a worthwhile life when they leave school. Pupils make a good contribution to the community but they feel that they could be more involved with the running of the school through, for example, the school council.

Lessons are characterised by good relationships and so teachers are generally secure in their management of pupils. They have good knowledge of the subjects that they teach and they plan carefully. However, planning focuses more on what teachers are going to do than on precisely what new skills or knowledge pupils are expected to learn. As a result, some activities are not as effective as others in promoting individuals' progress and teachers cannot assess the extent of their learning against what is expected of them. Nevertheless, activities are generally interesting and varied and pupils greatly enjoy them as they develop a growing appetite for learning. Their improved confidence, social awareness and communication skills enable them to rise to the challenge and so they learn at a good rate.

The school provides a good curriculum that is supported by very good links with local schools and colleges and visits into the local and wider communities, including mainland Europe. Pupils gain a good understanding of other cultures, such as through the recently developed link with a Kenyan school, and they know about the achievements of particular groups of people through topics such as Black History Week. However, planning does not actively promote the diverse nature of modern-

day Britain as much as it could. A strong emphasis on developing computer skills, literacy and numeracy enables pupils to make good progress in these areas. A comprehensive and effective personal, social and health education programme gives pupils an excellent understanding of what constitutes a safe and healthy lifestyle. Pupils' destinations on leaving school confirm that they are prepared very well for the move through the work-related learning programme and their success in accredited examinations. The vast majority go to college or directly into employment. They succeed there because they have not only the necessary academic or vocational qualifications, but also the interpersonal and team-working skills required.

Meadows is a complex organisation with many tiers of management. These include trustees, centrally employed charity staff, governors and school staff with a range of responsibilities in a variety of settings. The different tiers work very closely, with clearly delegated roles and powers, which underpins the school's effectiveness. However, there is a growing awareness within the charity that governors do not have the impact that they could have in supporting and developing the school because current arrangements limit their ability to take decisions at a local level. Staff provide good leadership and management across the school. They have taken the necessary action in response to the key issues raised in the previous inspection report, and they have developed a good school improvement plan based on effective internal auditing of provision.

Leaders have secured a very safe and caring school, with all current safeguarding procedures in place, underpinned by the outstanding level of pastoral guidance that it provides. While pupils make good academic progress, leaders realise that the systems for supporting this are not so refined. They are at an early stage of interrogating robustly pupils' attainments and hence measuring their progress through National Curriculum levels over time. This limits their ability to know whether different groups of pupils achieve equally well, or to compare their performance in different subjects. Consequently, although it is happening in some subjects, generally teachers are at an early stage of using assessment data to set each pupil long-term curriculum targets, and to share these with those pupils they judge to have the emotional capacity to deal with the information.

The school has good capacity to develop further. It is ambitious and has charted a clear direction in which it wishes to move, which includes the possibility of applying for specialist status for behaviour management.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Ofsted inspectors visited the residential facilities in July 2007. They concluded that the boarding houses were of the highest quality. They are extremely well managed and provide an outstanding level of care. Pupils receive an exceptionally high level of guidance and support and so they make excellent progress in learning about how to remain healthy and stay safe. The outstanding emphasis on promoting self-help skills and the responsibilities of being part of a community encourages pupils to develop independence and an understanding of living and working alongside others. Inspectors commented that the most impressive feature of the residential provision is the extent to which care staff and school staff work together to ensure a consistent approach to every pupil. This integrated teamwork is very influential in promoting

pupils' personal development. The close liaison between staff teams also contributes significantly to the effectiveness of the residential provision in supporting, extending and enriching pupils' learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Scrutinise assessment data more robustly so that any underachievement of individuals or groups of pupils is picked up quickly and acted upon.
- Set long-term academic targets for all pupils in all subjects and share them with pupils as judged appropriate.
- Plan lessons more effectively through a sharper focus on what individual pupils are expected to learn.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

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?	2

¹ 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.

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meadows School, Southborough, Kent TN4 0RJ

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your school, and a particular thanks to those of you who gave up your own time to talk with me. It was very interesting to see you in lessons and around school.

You talked very openly and positively about your school and how it has helped you to learn better and to develop as responsible young people. I agree with you. Meadows is a good school and it does some things extremely well. Here is a list of my findings.

- Lessons are good. You learn quickly and make good progress in your work.
- You make excellent progress in managing your behaviour, developing a positive attitude to work and making relationships. You know a great deal about staying safe and being healthy.
- You leave school extremely well prepared for going to college or into work.
- The school looks after you very well.
- You are given an interesting variety of things to do in lessons and many visits help to bring learning alive.
- The boarding houses are excellent and staff help you a great deal.

The staff run the school well. They have many ideas about changes that they want to make and I have given them some more ideas.

- Make sure that every one of you is doing as well as you possibly can.
- Set targets for you so that you can work towards a goal.
- Plan lessons in a way that shows what each one of you is expected to learn.

The school is good but you can help it to get even better by attending as often as you can and by continuing to accept advice and working hard.

Thank you once again, and I wish all of you the very best of luck in the future, especially those who are taking examinations this year.

Mike Kell
Lead inspector