

Meadowhead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107149
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	377541
Inspection dates	29 February–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	James Kilner 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	1,670
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Neill
Headteacher	Catherine James
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

James Kilner	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nigel Cromey-Hawke	Additional inspector
Lynne Blakelock	Additional inspector
Robin Fugill	Additional inspector
Jane Alexander	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two day's notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 49 lessons, taught by 47 teachers, of which five were joint observations with members of the senior team. They held meetings with the school council and representatives from the student peer mentor group and held discussions with groups of students. They met with the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and school policies. They also analysed responses to inspection questionnaires completed by 216 parents and carers, and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Meadowhead is a larger than average secondary school, and is a specialist language college. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The very large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is around the national average, although the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The school is currently in the final stages of converting to an academy. It was awarded Trust Status in 2010 and works in partnership with feeder schools, the Sheffield College, the Universities, local and national businesses. Education for students above the age of 16 years is provided on the school campus as part of a Trust Partnership with the nearby Further Education College. This phase of education did not feature in this inspection. The school meets the current floor standard.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Meadowhead is a satisfactory school where students feel safe, enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. The school is not good because currently, achievement is only satisfactory. While there is evidence of better progress in Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics, performance across the school is variable.
- Teaching is satisfactory, although some good and outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. This variation results in students' progress being satisfactory overall throughout the school. Too often assessment information is not used precisely or consistently enough to plan learning activities which meet the full range of all students' abilities. Marking does not consistently guide students as to how they might improve their work and accelerate their progress. Consequently, not all students are making the same rates of progress leading to satisfactory rather than good achievement.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are well supported in their pastoral care by the committed school staff and the support of older students who are fully trained as peer mentors. Bullying of any kind is extremely rare because students demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. Consequently, the school works as a harmonious community where the beliefs, faiths and lifestyles of all are respected and valued.
- The headteacher provides effective leadership and coordinates the work of the school's array of partnerships well. Responsibilities are devolved appropriately across the school's experienced and committed leadership teams at both senior and middle leader level. Much valuable work to secure long-term sixth form provision for the school as well as the move towards becoming an academy are at an advanced stage of development. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are satisfactory and have led to improvements in teachers' classroom skills. However, some of the routine monitoring of students'

progress linked to good and better teaching has not been effective enough in raising levels of attainment.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment levels to above average throughout the school by ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better, through:
 - using information about students' progress to provide tasks which meet their needs and interests regardless of their abilities
 - ensuring that marking matches that of the very best already present so that it consistently informs students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further
 - systematically sharing the effective and outstanding teaching strategies already present so that all lessons are exemplified by the very best practice.
- Ensure that leaders and managers are effective at all levels by:
 - having a more precise understanding of the school's performance
 - monitoring accurately the quality of teaching and using the outcomes to secure improvements in the levels of progress made by students.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enjoy their learning and, in the main, apply themselves diligently in lessons. Their parents and carers feel that they are making good progress, although inspection findings reveal this to be satisfactory for most students. From prior attainment that is often in line with the national average, students make broadly satisfactory progress by the time they leave the school. There are some particular strengths, including the proportion of students gaining at least five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, and those gaining at least five A* to G grades. Results in 2011 showed better than expected progress for students in English and results were in line with those of students nationally for mathematics. The school has identified previous weaknesses in mathematics and is now succeeding in improving achievement so that gaps in the performance of differing groups are narrowing. For example, in an effective mathematics lesson where students were studying quadrants, the teacher's good subject knowledge and clearly focused activities led to good achievement. Students were then able to show good understanding of the concept being taught and, consequently, were able to apply their mathematical skills effectively when working independently. However, there is still work to be done to narrow the remaining gaps further. For some groups across the school, for example, those students eligible for free school meals and groups of girls of middle ability, progress is not as marked and there is some underachievement. Senior leaders are acutely aware of the problem and are working to narrow these gaps in attainment

for differing groups. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations show that there is more work to be done. School data indicate that the progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs is comparable to that made by all students and this was confirmed in lesson observations during the inspection.

For the most part parents, carers and students comment positively on how well they feel the school develops students' basic skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Inspectors judged that the school is more effective in improving literacy skills than numeracy skills across the curriculum. The impact of this can be seen, for example, in students' precision in measuring in design and technology and their confidence in speaking and reading. In an English lesson, students willingly took on roles to read in character from the set text 'To kill a mockingbird'.

Quality of teaching

While the majority of teaching in lessons observed during the inspection was good or better, overall the impact on students' learning is only satisfactory. This is because, in less effective lessons, insufficient account is taken of the wide range of abilities of the students in the groups being taught. In these lessons, all students are presented with the same work regardless of their ability and, consequently, not all are challenged; some find the work too easy and others too hard. Equally, students are not consistently aware of their targets and what must be done to achieve them. In some subjects, for example in English, marking is effective and students are guided as to how to improve. However, this is not yet a consistent practice throughout the school. This contributes to progress overall being satisfactory rather than good. In the best lessons, careful planning for specific individual needs influences the teaching, so that all students make rapid and sustained progress. Teachers' questioning is targeted, open-ended and searching. For example, in a lesson on the language of Shakespeare, students were fully engaged in their exploration of Elizabethan insults by linking it to modern day language used in text-messaging. As a result, students made good progress and were confident when working on independent activities.

The very large majority of parents and carers feel that their child is well taught. Inspectors judged it to be satisfactory. Teaching assistants are deployed well and provide good support, especially for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, some of whom were observed to make good progress. For example, a teaching assistant carefully sequencing language being used in an English lesson for students with specific learning difficulties ensured that they were able to make the same good rate of progress as their classmates. Teachers' expectations of students' behaviour is high and they are not disappointed as, in the main, students are diligent and remain on task throughout the lesson. Students show respect for the views of their peers and listen patiently to one another's ideas. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons as well as through the wide range of curriculum opportunities and events after school. Many students are eagerly preparing to take part in a large-scale musical event involving all schools in the Partnership Trust. The school's very strong artistic focus is clearly shown in the aesthetic displays of students' high quality work which pervade the school. While enrichment of learning is good, planning for learning to develop students' numeracy skills across a range of subjects is not consistently accurate in meeting students'

needs in order to accelerate their progress. The school are aware of the need to strengthen this aspect and have plans in hand to remedy it.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are well behaved, polite and respectful. They move around the large site calmly and safely. Their behaviour in lessons is good and when it does fall below expectations, strategies and sanctions designed to put things right are consistently and effectively applied. They are receptive of one another's ideas, for example, in a lesson considering opinions surrounding the attack on the Twin Towers, students considered respectfully the views of people from the Muslim faith. While the majority of students and their parents and carers agree with inspectors that behaviour is good, a few voiced concerns about behaviour in lessons. Inspectors do not endorse this view. Scrutiny of behavioural records shows that behaviour over time is good. Exclusions, already lower than national figures, are dropping and attendance is above average.

Students feel safe at school and their parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that they are safe. The school has good systems in place to ensure the safety of students. Students respect the peer mentoring scheme whereby older students are trained in child protection and conflict resolution. This helps to ensure the school is largely peaceful and harmonious with few incidences of falling out. Students show an astute awareness for internet and mobile phone safety and will not tolerate bullying in any form. Where cases are uncovered or reported to senior leaders and peer mentors, the school is swift to act to resolve the situation. Although a few parents and carers expressed concern about bullying, the very large majority have confidence in the school to handle any issues well, as do students. Inspectors found this confidence to be well founded.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have high aspirations for the school. A number of these intentions for the future of its students and the wider community are currently being met, for example, the work to secure a dedicated sixth form for the school. Systems to monitor the effectiveness of the school's provision are firmly embedded in the working practice of the school. The governing body gives good support to the school and is fully involved in action planning and self-evaluation. However, much analysis and evaluation focuses too heavily on the school's provision for students without considering in sufficient detail the impact on students' progress and achievement. Of particular note has been the promotion of advanced skills teachers to the leadership team charged with improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. To some extent this is proving fruitful. However, while there has been a due emphasis in ensuring teachers' classroom skills are consistently good, actions to monitor students' learning have been less successful. Consequently, the school has not had enough accurate information on the outcomes for students following lesson observations to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good or better across the school. There is robust intolerance of any form of inequality evident in systems to monitor the well-being and academic progress of all students. While systems identifying rates of achievement between different groups feature in the school's development planning, these are not

sufficiently embedded in classroom practice. The differing needs of students within groups are noted in teachers' planning but this does not consistently lead to work being set at appropriate levels to meet their varying needs. Training for staff and the governing body to equip them with the skills to ensure students' safety and to protect them is regular and appropriate.

The school's specialism adds to its distinct character and makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development with a vast array of opportunities to link with schools in, for example, China and Europe. The provision of several languages, some of which are taught as twilight lessons is significant in promoting students' good cultural understanding, through a range of activities and events. The curriculum at both key stages continues to evolve, resulting in increasingly relevant, varied and interesting learning opportunities for students. It promotes students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example in an effective religious education lesson students studied the Austrian picture of 'The mocking of Christ' and engaged in informed, sensitive discussion on differing views on Christianity and freedom of religious beliefs. Enrichment of learning is good, with a wide range of popular after-school activities. Planning for learning, however, is not consistently accurate in meeting pupils' needs necessary to accelerate their progress. Strong partnerships across the trust ensure a wide range of opportunities for students to utilise their skills and academic abilities in real-life work situations. For example, senior staff from prestigious companies and organisations participate in interview and job application processes with students ensuring that they are well-equipped to secure training or employment after they leave. As a result, only a few students are not in employment, education or training when they leave school. The strength of partnerships within the trust, together with improvements since the previous inspection ensures that the school has the capacity to improve.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Meadowhead School, Sheffield, S8 8BR

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Thank you for taking the time to discuss your school with us, we really enjoyed meeting you. Your behaviour around the site and in lessons was good and we heard from you and from your parents and carers that this is usually the case. You have positive attitudes to learning and to school. You benefit greatly from being in a Partnership Trust which provides a wide range of opportunities for you to experience the real world of work and to be involved in your community.

Meadowhead is a satisfactory school which cares for you well and has high aspirations for the future of the school as it develops a sixth form of its own and moves to become an academy. Your achievement is currently satisfactory, for some of you it is better but there are variations between groups and subjects. Some of the teaching is good and can be outstanding but again it is currently satisfactory because it needs to focus more on your specific needs in lessons to help accelerate your progress. In lessons where teachers set just one task, some students struggle while others find the work too easy. While teachers provide regular marking, sometimes it does not give you clear advice as to how to improve.

We have asked your headteacher and the teachers to build on the current good practice so that all teaching is as good as the best already present by:

- ensuring tasks in lessons meet the learning needs of everyone in the class
- ensuring that all teachers mark your work as effectively as the best.

We have also asked that senior leaders focus on how well you are learning when they monitor lessons. You can play your part ensuring that your school continues to be a harmonious community.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner
Her Majesty's Inspector

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