

# Meadows School

Wardle Road, Wardle, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 9EN

## Inspection dates

26–28 March 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Proprietors, leaders and governors have maintained a good quality of education while successfully managing a restructuring of staffing, teaching and the curriculum. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher provides clear direction to improve the school. She has instilled a positive culture, where staff and pupils feel valued.
- Effective partnership working between school staff, care professionals and therapists ensures that pupils' emotional, mental health and learning needs are met effectively.
- The curriculum is adapted successfully to each pupil's abilities, while taking account of their therapeutic needs.
- All staff are committed to helping pupils to improve their life chances. Pupils grow in confidence and develop a positive mindset as they establish trust with teachers.
- Pupils feel safe and are safe in school. Their behaviour and attendance improve considerably the longer that they are in school.
- Leaders also focus well on pupils' safety, well-being and attendance at alternative provision.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of pupils' learning needs.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. They achieve a range of qualifications which support their aspirations.
- Occasionally, however, teaching in foundation subjects does not address pupils' misconceptions, extend their vocabulary and promote their literacy skills as well as it could.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as their progress in English. This is because pupils are not supported to use, apply and master new learning in mathematics as effectively as they could be.
- Pupils receive useful careers advice, information and guidance from an impartial adviser. However, careers education is not yet comprehensive throughout the school.
- The development of pupils' key skills and the range of qualifications they gain support them well for the next stage in their education, training or employment.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
  - ensuring that teaching addresses pupils' misconceptions and fills gaps in their knowledge and skills successfully in personal, social and health education (PSHE), history, citizenship and religious education
  - supporting the development of pupils' vocabulary and literacy skills across the curriculum
  - making sure that pupils can use, apply and master the mathematical knowledge and skills that they are taught.
- Further develop careers education at key stages 3 and 4 and extend opportunities for work experience at key stage 4.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Proprietors, governors and leaders have maintained the good quality of provision and good outcomes for pupils while managing a substantial reorganisation of the school. Pupils are no longer taught individually within their homes. They attend school and also attend a range of alternative providers. Leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- The recently appointed headteacher is knowledgeable. She provides clear direction to secure further improvements. Together with the quality manager, she checks and assures pupils' safety and the quality of education at school and at all alternative provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and school improvement planning is focused on the most important priorities.
- The headteacher and quality manager conduct thorough, weekly checks on teaching and learning. They also scrutinise pupils' work and track pupils' progress closely. Feedback to teachers is incisive and supports improvement. Leaders' checks are moderated and validated by an external school improvement adviser employed by the company.
- Staff are motivated and committed to helping pupils to improve their life chances. Training is planned to support improvement. The new procedures to manage the performance of teachers ensure that staff are aware of whole-school and personal targets.
- Successful partnership working and clear lines of communication are integral to the school's success. Leaders work closely with carers and therapists to ensure that each pupil's social, emotional and learning needs are understood fully. Leaders also work in close partnership with external professionals. These include corporate parents, local schools, social care and health professionals and representatives from each child's placing local authority.
- Leaders are outward-looking. They share and learn from effective practice, for example through their participation in the 'G8Way' federation of schools in Cheshire East and the National Association of Special Schools (NASS).
- The curriculum is planned successfully to meet each pupil's specific social, emotional, therapeutic and learning needs. Pupils join the school at any time from Year 7 onwards. They usually have significant gaps in their education and additional learning needs. All pupils complete an extremely thorough six-week 'school assessment and reintegration programme' (SARP), which informs subsequent teaching and learning.
- At key stage 3, the curriculum supports pupils successfully to develop skills for learning. At key stage 4, pupils work towards a range of qualifications that are appropriate to their abilities and that support their aspirations. The school curriculum covers a range of subjects. It supports pupils to catch up to national curriculum expectations for their age. This helps pupils to access further education or reintegrate into mainstream education, where appropriate.
- The curriculum is broadened by the use of alternative provision and additional activities. For example, pupils can take courses in animal care, land sciences, construction and music. They participate in a range of outdoor pursuits, including mountain biking,

canoeing, physical education (PE) and swimming. Such activities have a positive impact on pupils' development and progress.

- The school prepares pupils positively for life in modern society and supports pupils to develop a good understanding of British values and systems. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is developed effectively across the curriculum. Pupils discuss with maturity topics such as equality and discrimination, extremism, social and legal justice and human rights. They show tolerance and respect for people with protected characteristics and with different faiths and cultures.
- Carers and social care professionals who made their views known were very positive about the work of the school. They commented particularly on the difference that the school has made 'helping children to develop a more positive mindset and engage more confidently in education'. The inspection corroborates these views.

## **Governance**

- Governance is provided by a governing body, which includes proprietors, company directors and governors with a range of skills.
- Governors are extremely well informed about the work of the school, the impact of alternative provision and the progress of each pupil. They visit the school regularly and receive weekly, detailed reports. Governors have relevant knowledge and skills to quality-assure the work of the school and hold leaders to account.
- Governors make sure that the local authorities who have placed children at the school receive a full account of expenditure, as well as reports on pupils' learning and well-being. Representatives from local authorities who spoke to the inspector were positive about the work of the school.
- The school website has been revised and meets requirements.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of school staff meet requirements. Leaders also check that pre-employment checks have been carried out on staff at the alternative providers. The safeguarding and related policies take account of current government requirements. They are available on the school's website.
- Thorough safeguarding records and detailed risk assessments are in place for each pupil. The detailed records are shared between education, care and therapy professionals. This ensures that all staff are aware of risks and positive strategies to support pupils. There is effective ongoing communication. All staff are aware of any significant incidents and there is consistency in their approach.
- Staff have completed safeguarding training relevant to their roles. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities. Staff are trained to a high standard to identify and minimise risk for the vulnerable pupils in their care. Staff are also trained in supporting pupils' mental health and well-being, in risks associated with extremism, in crisis intervention and in physical restraint. Staff know the routes to follow to report and act on

concerns.

- Leaders and all staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils in school and at the alternative provision. Carers are contacted immediately if there are any concerns.
- Leaders act quickly and engage with a range of external agencies where pupils are vulnerable to external risks. These risks include those associated with criminality, sexual exploitation, gang membership, drug misuse and extremism.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Pupils' learning and therapeutic needs are assessed thoroughly when they enter the school. A thorough six-week SARP includes standardised assessments in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics and science. Pupils also do cognitive ability tests and have dyslexia screening. The thorough assessments establish a baseline and support planning for subsequent learning and therapy.
- Small-group and individualised instruction supports pupils to make good progress from their different starting points. Pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are taken into account fully when planning teaching. Teachers also liaise with home staff, virtual headteachers and social workers to ensure that the pupils' personal education plans are supported effectively.
- Positive, constructive relationships between staff and pupils are a key factor in the success of teaching. Many pupils have not engaged in education for a considerable time. Barriers to learning and well-being are thoroughly evaluated. Teachers use a range of positive strategies to help pupils to re-engage with learning.
- School staff oversee teaching and learning in alternative provision as they accompany pupils to the different sites. Teachers also teach core subjects in classrooms at the Agricultural and Rural Centre (ARC), which pupils attend for up to four days. This ensures consistency in teaching and supports progression in pupils' learning.
- Teaching is planned successfully to enable pupils to achieve a range of qualifications in a relatively short period of time. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. They use assessment effectively to help pupils to fill gaps in their learning. Pupils' literacy skills are developed well in English lessons.
- On occasions, in foundation subjects, pupils' misconceptions are not addressed fully. These may have arisen due to their lack of general knowledge or limited vocabulary or literacy skills. In PSHE, for example, pupils found it difficult to debate the 'pros and cons' of a shorter or longer working week. This was because they did not understand concepts such as 'productivity' and had no understanding of the Netherlands or Greece as places.
- Teaching in mathematics equips pupils successfully with the mathematical knowledge and skills that they need to achieve a mathematics qualification. However, pupils are not given time to use and apply their developing knowledge and skills independently. Pupils' work is often highly supported. They move on to new mathematical topics quickly, without having sufficient time to fully master key concepts.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

## **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have often had negative experiences in education before joining the school. There is a strong focus on building trust and minimising barriers to learning when pupils first start at the school. The six-week SARP allows pupils to adapt gradually to the school routine while their needs are assessed in detail.
- Daily and weekly meetings between care, therapy and school staff ensure that pupils' therapeutic, physical and mental health needs are fully known by all staff. Therapists provide good-quality training and coaching for staff, for example in recognising and dealing with attachment disorder and helping pupils to develop a positive mindset.
- Pupils' personal health and safety are promoted effectively. Pupils learn in detail about topics such as positive relationships, looking after their body and dealing with peer pressure. Pupils' physical health and fitness are promoted very effectively in outdoor pursuits, PE and land sciences.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. Staff ensure that pupils are safe in school. Pupils feel free from bullying and harassment. Records of poor behaviour and serious incidents are thorough. Any incidents are followed up meticulously. Appropriate action is taken to help pupils to amend their behaviour positively.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep safe in the world beyond school. They learn about risks associated with extremism, drug and alcohol misuse, and gang membership. E-safety tuition is provided in the homes by care staff. Pupils also complete an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualification in independent living skills within the homes.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is currently provided through an external independent adviser. The adviser works with pupils in individual sessions and through careers-focused units in PSHE.
- The school has registered with 'Inspiring IAG', a licensed national provider of the national quality award in CEIAG. The school is pursuing the award over a three-year period. Leaders have completed an audit. There is a clear plan of action to improve CEIAG. However, the careers curriculum and work experience are not developed fully.
- Leaders monitor the attendance and safety of pupils attending alternative providers. Leaders do this through daily contact and weekly quality assurance visits. Pupils are closely supervised. They are taught by school staff for some of the time at the ARC.
- When pupils are ready to move to a mainstream school, they are supported effectively through managed moves. This enables them to make the transition gradually and with support.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning improve the longer that they are in school. Pupils are cooperative in lessons, and disruption is rare. Pupils are not always highly motivated, however, especially if they do not fully understand the concepts or they find the activities

difficult.

- Pupils have a good understanding of the school's 'consequences programme', which outlines the expectations for behaviour. Pupils appreciate the consistency with which expectations for behaviour are followed by all staff at school and at the ARC.
- Pupils get on well. They are kind and respectful. They know that, sometimes, individuals have 'bad days'. Pupils do their best to be supportive and caring towards each other.
- Pupils' attendance overall has improved considerably since the school's last inspection. In 2018, it was at 91.7%, which was closer to the national average than it has ever been. The attendance of individual pupils improves significantly when compared to their attendance at their previous schools. The school does not exclude pupils. There have not been any permanent or fixed-term exclusions in three years.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils have a wide range of ability and educational experiences prior to joining the school. They join at any point from Year 7 onwards. They may stay in school for a few months or for several years. The majority are working below the national curriculum standards for their age when they join school.
- Pupils make good progress from their various starting points. Their work ethic improves and they are increasingly productive as they establish trust with teachers and begin to see the value in education.
- Pupils gain a number of useful qualifications suited to their abilities. These include certificates in functional skills, ASDAN qualifications, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance units and GCSE qualifications. In 2018, all pupils who left the school in Year 11 achieved qualifications in English and mathematics, with 40% attaining a GCSE in mathematics and 80% attaining a GCSE in English.
- Pupils develop their vocabulary and literacy skills very effectively in English lessons. Literacy skills are not as well developed in foundation subjects, however. On occasions, pupils' lack of general knowledge and limited literacy skills inhibit their learning and progress.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. However, their progress is not as strong as their progress in English. Mathematical skills are developed with a high level of teacher support in mathematics lessons. Pupils have opportunities to apply some of their mathematical skills in other subjects, for example in measuring out plots for planting in land sciences and weighing feed for the ponies, alpacas, rabbits, chickens and ducks at the ARC. However, pupils have limited opportunities to use, apply and master the mathematical knowledge gained in mathematics lessons before moving on to new topics.
- Pupils' technology skills are developed in specific lessons. They use information and communication technology to support learning across the curriculum. Pupils' scientific skills are developed well in biology, land science and animal care.
- The development of pupils' key skills and the range of qualifications they gain support them well for the next stage in their education, training or employment. In 2018, all pupils who left in Year 11 went into further education or an apprenticeship.



## School details

Unique reference number	136257
DfE registration number	354/6202
Inspection number	10067908

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Meadows Care Limited
Chair	Sue Cryer
Headteacher	Paula Forth
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,940
Telephone number	01706 630 022
Website	<a href="http://meadows-school.co.uk">http://meadows-school.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:paulaforth@meadowscare.co.uk">paulaforth@meadowscare.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	19–21 April 2016

## Information about this school

- The school provides alternative education for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream school. The school is registered for 21 pupils. There are currently 12 pupils on roll.
- All pupils are looked after by local authorities across the country and are in residential care.
- All pupils have social, emotional and mental health special educational needs. They either have, or are in the process of being assessed for, an EHC plan.
- Since the last inspection, the organisation of the school and the curriculum offer have

changed. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were taught at the school in small groups and all received additional individual tuition in classrooms in the children's homes. Pupils are not taught in their homes anymore. They are taught in small groups in newly built classrooms on the school site for between two to six sessions. They attend alternative provision for the rest of the time.

- The school currently uses four alternative providers. These are the ARC in Stockport, Link4Life, Rubber Soul music studio, which is part of SMS Education Limited, and ACE Training. Pupils may spend up to four days a week at the ARC. School staff often accompany pupils to the ARC and teach lessons at that site. Pupils spend one or two sessions at Link4Life and Rubber Soul and up to four afternoons at ACE.
- The leadership and staffing structure of the school have been reorganised. The number of teaching staff was reduced significantly in April 2017. The deputy headteacher was acting headteacher from June 2018 and became the substantive headteacher in January 2019.
- The school commissions support from a school improvement adviser from G8Way. This is a federation of three schools in Cheshire East: Knutsford Academy, Poynton High School and Wilmslow High School. The school also shares effective practice within a north-west consortium of special schools, which is part of NASS.
- The previous inspection was conducted in April 2016 at no notice, in response to complaints. That inspection found the overall effectiveness and all aspects of the school's work to be good.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector examined the premises and observed the school's work.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning at the school and also at the ARC. She carried out a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work in all subjects.
- The inspector spoke with pupils during lessons and in meetings to gain their views on the work of the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including: action planning; self-evaluation; monitoring of teaching and performance management; the tracking of pupils' progress; safeguarding procedures; health and safety checks; and risk assessments. The school website was accessed. School policies were seen.
- The inspector met with school proprietors, the chair and members of the governing body, the headteacher, the school quality manager, school staff and therapists. She spoke by telephone to leaders at the alternative provision used by the school that could not be visited during the inspection. She also spoke by telephone to social workers, local authority representatives, care professionals and house managers.

## Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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