

Meadowside Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110973
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	288816
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Marguerite McCloy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	226
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms K Buckley
Headteacher	Ms Meg Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002
School address	Clough Avenue Longford Warrington Cheshire WA2 9PH
Telephone number	01925 632705
Fax number	01925 630922

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Inspection number	288816

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Meadowside is a slightly smaller than average sized primary school situated in the Longford district of Warrington, in an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the number with a first language other than English is small. More than a third of the pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and 12% have statements of special educational need (SEN). These proportions are significantly higher than average.

The school houses three special units for SEN pupils with a range of learning and behavioural difficulties (totalling 34 places), serving all areas across Warrington.

Meadowside has recently been accredited with International School and Eco School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Meadowside is providing an effective education for its pupils and has a number of strengths which show that it is a rapidly improving school. Very good leadership and management have ensured that the school has made significant progress in a number of key areas since its last inspection, although this is not yet reflected in overall achievement, which is satisfactory.

Children enter the school with well below average skills and reach standards which remain significantly below average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The school's results overall showed a worrying downward trend between 2002 and 2005, during which a significant proportion of pupils were making inadequate progress. The 2006 results were also weak. Despite small signs of improvement, standards in English and mathematics are still too low.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Despite some teaching being outstanding on occasions, lessons are not yet consistently good enough to make up lost ground in order to improve standards quickly. The school is aware of these inconsistencies and is taking determined action to remedy them. There is a strong team spirit, staff morale is high and professional development activities are well planned to meet the school's identified priorities.

The positive ethos and air of enthusiasm for learning in the school contribute to the high quality relationships that exist between adults and pupils. The school is fully committed to the inclusion of all pupils and the removal of barriers to learning. This is achieved through very effective pastoral care, guidance and support which are resulting in good personal development and well-being for most pupils. Pupils who are vulnerable, or have additional learning needs, are identified early so that clear plans can be laid down to provide them with good quality support to enable them to make progress.

Leaders are successfully cultivating a more positive image of the school in its locality. Pupils themselves are encouraged to play an important part in this, for example, in helping to choose the uniform and logo to complement the school's new name, and in responding well to the school's raised expectations of their attitudes, behaviour and attendance. The very positive responses of parents who completed the inspection questionnaires show recognition of the school's recent improvements and its strengths in promoting their child's personal development as well as academic achievement.

Taking into account the school's expenditure per pupil, and the fact that current standards remain below average, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better across the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The majority of pupils enter the school with well below average attainment, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in their personal and social skills. Results in 2006 tests showed that standards remain very low by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and too many pupils made insufficient progress during their time at the school.

Nevertheless, test results did indicate signs of improvement compared to the school's performance between 2002 and 2005, when achievement had been declining at the end of both key stages. The school had correctly identified factors contributing to the underachievement of some pupils and took appropriate action to halt the decline. Significant improvements in leadership, teaching and learning and the overall ethos of the school have been made so that pupils are now making satisfactory progress.

Pupils now have a good start to their education because of the improved quality of the school's provision in the Foundation Stage. This is due to effective planning and teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes, where staff work closely together to enable continuity in the required areas of learning. Inspectors also found that the high quality of teaching in upper Key Stage 2 is leading to accelerated progress for a good proportion of pupils so that there is more likelihood of the school meeting its challenging targets in 2007 and beyond.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils clearly enjoy being at Meadowside school and this is clearly seen in the very good improvement in attendance since the last inspection, so that it is now in line with the national average. This has been brought about not only because of the many successful initiatives introduced by the school, but also by significant improvements in the school's overall ethos and learning environment.

The school's particular emphasis on meeting pupils' personal and emotional needs makes a vital contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is now good. Pupils learn about other cultures and this is strengthened by the school's focus on internationalism and its new links with a school in South Africa. Pupils' spirituality is developed through opportunities for prayer and reflection as well as a clear focus across the school on the value of each person. The regular classroom morning meetings successfully promote pupils' self-esteem and confidence, helping them to develop relationships and understand their feelings.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and many pupils are involved in the active clubs on offer to them. Pupils know about balanced diets and healthy foods, although this is not always reflected in their packed lunch choices. Pupils contribute well to their school community by involvement in the school council and eco club as well as helping others on the playground when acting as 'playground buddies'. They enjoy being able to take on such responsibilities and their many contributions to charities show a clear involvement in the wider community.

Pupils are generally well behaved around school and in most lessons. A minority need firm guidance and reminders about appropriate behaviour on some occasions, for example, in lessons where the teaching is less successful at fully engaging pupils in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some strong features which demonstrate that good progress has recently been made in developing teachers' skills. Senior leaders are aware of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school and recognise this as an area to strengthen, along with the sharing of best practice seen in some classes.

Teachers generally plan their lessons well, in an agreed format which the school has developed to improve the consistency and quality of planning. Although learning objectives are usually made clear, in a minority of lessons these describe what the pupils should do, rather than what they should learn by the end of the lesson. This impedes pupils' progress in some lessons.

Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and often participate with enthusiasm, encouraged by positive and constructive relationships with adults and each other. Skilled teaching assistants encourage and support pupils to contribute to lessons and give of their best. This ensures that vulnerable pupils and those with learning and behavioural difficulties make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

In the best lessons, teachers are very skilled at motivating pupils and recognising their achievements, so that good behaviour and attitudes are a natural part of their learning. In these lessons: pupils are confident to work independently and use their initiative; they are aware of what they are learning and what they need to do to improve; and teachers know the pupils' capabilities well and provide appropriate challenge and support. As a result, pupils make good progress. Many pupils are aware of their targets for improvement and teachers often refer to these when marking pupils' work. In less successful lessons, tasks are not fully matched to pupils' needs and behaviour is not managed effectively so that a minority of pupils interrupt the learning of others.

Role play is a lively and effective feature of many lessons, developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence as well as strengthening their speaking and listening skills. Classes are well resourced and good use is made of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and to stimulate pupils' interest and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good quality, well-balanced curriculum which is making a positive contribution to the improvements being made in pupils' learning, their personal development and enjoyment of school life. Curriculum plans maintain a clear focus on raising attainment and matching the needs of all groups of pupils. Good provision is made within the curriculum for pupils with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties, for those who are identified as gifted and talented and to develop all pupils' self-esteem in order to raise their aspirations. Initiatives such as the Year 5 'Sound Start' music project and a range of strategies to target underachieving pupils are resulting in improved progress.

The school makes good use of partnerships to enhance the curriculum, for instance, links with the feeder high school, a specialist sports college. A good range of educational trips and contributions from visitors are arranged, most of which are linked to topics being covered in

class. Pupils are taught French, Spanish and German and have a good range of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities.

Structured role-play areas around classrooms and corridors reflect the school's emphasis on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills. The school has plans to further develop the curriculum in an imaginative and creative way and staff share an enthusiasm and determination to achieve this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for by highly committed staff who value each pupil as an individual. Safeguarding requirements are met and regular risk assessments are carried out. Pupils feel safe and appreciate that adults will listen to them and take action if something makes them feel unhappy. For example, following some concerns expressed by pupils about the behaviour of a minority of their classmates around a particular area of the playground, changes were made to lunchtime arrangements.

The school fosters positive relationships and good communication with parents, including regular newsletters, provision for a parents' meeting room and parent workshops. Family Learning courses offered locally are accessed by a number of parents. These links contribute to improvements in pupils' personal development as parents and carers feel more a part of the school community and are better able to help their children. Partnerships with outside agencies are managed well for the benefit of pupils, for example, with services for health, social care and community support. The school's appointment of a capable learning mentor has also helped to develop closer links with families in order to improve attendance and punctuality. Good links with the high school aid pupils' transition to the next stage of their education.

The care and support for pupils in the enhanced provision, or SEN units, have a positive effect both on their achievement and personal development. All pupils are provided with targets in the core subjects which help guide them to improve their work. Aspirations are being raised through, for example, older pupils learning about life at university.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong and effective leadership and management have been the driving forces that have delivered significant improvements in all aspects of this school's work since its last inspection, when a number of weaknesses were identified.

Since her appointment, less than two years ago, the headteacher has demonstrated inspirational leadership. With very effective support from the deputy headteacher, she has articulated a clear vision for the school's development which is shared by staff, governors and other stakeholders. The headteacher's message has enthused staff: she possesses a relentless determination that each child's needs will be met and that the school must be at the heart of the local community.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development, although their judgement on overall effectiveness was too optimistic. However, taken overall, these judgements understandably reflect the clear signs of improvement, although these are yet to have full impact on pupils' achievement and standards.

The school's governors, led by an experienced and knowledgeable chair, are supportive of the school and recognise the significant improvements being made to its provision. They are well informed about the school's development and many have taken up opportunities to attend training in order to improve their role as a 'critical friend' in holding the school to account for its performance.

The headteacher, with the support of governors, has worked particularly hard to bring about necessary improvements to the fabric of the school and this has resulted in a greatly enhanced environment in which to work and learn. The fact that this has been achieved despite having to overcome a deficit budget is testament to the leadership's effective financial management and use of resources. Successful bids for additional funding from a variety of sources have helped the school to achieve these improvements in a relatively short time.

The local authority identified concerns about the standard of education at Meadowside (formerly known as Long Lane Primary) following a monitoring visit early in 2006. Support has been provided by the authority's advisers and consultants, who are currently working with the school on the intensifying support programme aimed at raising standards in English and mathematics. Staff have responded positively to this and are beginning to see the benefits in pupils' improving achievement.

The very good progress made by the school since its last inspection, and the strengths which are now evident in leadership and management, indicate that the school has good capacity for improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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.

Annex A

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, inspectors recently visited your school to look at how well you are being looked after and educated there. We enjoyed our time at Meadowside and would like to thank you for helping us by talking to inspectors in lessons and around the school.

We found that, although the school is satisfactory at the moment, it is very quickly getting much better than that because of all the improvements that have been made over the last year or so. The standards some of you reach in your work are still below average, but you now make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in your learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although many lessons are now good because of better teaching and learning. The reason why things are getting better is that some important areas of the school's work are now good, especially leadership and management, and because you have an excellent headteacher who is well supported by other leaders, governors and staff.

We know that you enjoy school and most of you are well behaved - only a few children let the others down occasionally - but all of you are very well cared for and helped to do the best you can. The school provides lots of interesting activities for you and is particularly good at helping you to become confident and believe in yourselves, as each of you is a special individual. We particularly liked to see how everyone smiles a lot at Meadowside, because you and your teachers and all the other adults are happy there and are proud of your school. This is great because it shows that you really want to do even better and you will achieve good things in the future!

We have asked the school to do all it can to raise standards further in English and mathematics and to make all of the teaching good or better so that you will make good progress more quickly. You can help by always working hard and trying your best in every lesson. Just think how difficult it will be then for the teachers to decide who gets the achievement awards in assembly each week!