

Inspection of a good school: Meadow Wood School

Coldharbour Lane, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 4NN

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2023

Outcome

Meadow Wood School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are welcomed warmly into this small, inclusive school. They are eager to arrive at school to take part in their learning and be with their friends. Pupils flourish under the vigilant and caring adult community. Over time, they grow in confidence and independence.

Pupils access a curriculum that is tightly linked to their varied starting points and previous experiences. Teaching is adapted and adjusted effectively for their needs. Pupils' learning and physical needs are very well met.

Pupils are well supported to ensure that they can communicate their views, aspirations and interests. They are helped to use a variety of communication aids to do this. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to socialise and be with their friends. They get on very well with each other. Pupils say there is no bullying at all.

Pupils access a range of trips and experiences, including the zoo and a local arts centre. They enjoy music or take part in sports events like the 'panathlon'. The school council represents pupils and supports them to have a view in how the school is run.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher and her team have put in place a well-considered curriculum. To make sure this supports pupils' individual needs, they have created three pathways of learning. In each pathway, pupils access a broad range of subjects. When appropriate, pupils access the formal early years foundation stage and national curriculum subjects.

Developing pupils' communication and reading skills features prominently in the curriculum. Staff are well trained to use different forms of communication strategies and aids. They help pupils to become increasingly independent in their ability to communicate with staff and each other. Pupils are read to regularly by staff, who make stories

accessible through talk or sensory experiences. When appropriate, pupils access an effective phonics programme.

Leaders' curriculum carefully prescribes for staff what pupils should be able to do, step by step. This enables staff to plan effective activities that help pupils to learn and develop well. Most staff use a wide variety of resources, sensory techniques and stimuli to best meet the needs of pupils. Teachers capture pupils' interests and so pupils demonstrate a fascination in learning about themselves and the world around them. However, there are times, including in phonics, where some staff do not pick the most effective approaches to help pupils learn. This means, in these instances, that pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders are addressing this through training.

Staff use their ongoing checks on pupils to quickly gain a clear picture of pupils' strengths and areas for development. Staff work extremely closely with other health and care professionals. Any support for pupils tightly matches their educational, health and care (EHC) plans. This includes in pupils' physical development. Well-trained staff work closely with therapists, external specialists and agencies. Staff break down what pupils need to learn into small, achievable steps, to support pupils' increasing independence in their movement around school and in their lives.

Leaders spot quickly any change in pupils' moods or if they are unhappy. A raft of strategies support staff to help pupils settle and refocus on their learning. Multisensory music therapy and other workshops, for instance, engage and stimulate pupils. The relationships curriculum is used well to support pupils to play and build friendships. As a result, pupils behave exceptionally well and love their time at the school.

The 'life skills' curriculum successfully weaves together a relevant personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme with important knowledge to ready pupils for their next steps. Staff, for instance, support pupils to take care of themselves through lessons on personal hygiene or how to clean their teeth.

Pastoral care is a key priority for the school. Workshops for parents and a 'siblings club', for example, allow the school to work closely with pupils and their families. Relationships between staff, pupils and their families are positive and fundamental to the success of the school.

Leaders and governors consider staff workload and well-being carefully. Leaders recognise the importance of staff training and development in ensuring that pupils are well looked after. Staff feel part of 'the team' and work with leaders and governors to continue to improve the school further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure all staff have the necessary training and support to help all pupils, including those with very complex needs. Staff know the risks to pupils in this school and report concerns promptly to safeguarding leaders. Effective record-keeping ensures that

leaders have an excellent understanding of the challenges to pupils and their families. Leaders take robust action in response to concerns, working closely with a range of external agencies to make sure pupils and their families get the help they need.

High-quality recruitment and induction processes mean that staff are acutely aware of how to move and lift pupils, for example, or supporting pupils with complex medical needs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, some staff do not choose the most helpful approaches to support pupils to learn, including in phonics. This means, in those instances, learning is either trickier or easier for pupils than it should be. Pupils do not learn as much or as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all staff are well trained to identify the most effective activities, tasks and resources to support pupils' to learn well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117691
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10212386
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Vanessa Robinson and Jane Rogers
Headteacher	Merja Paakkonen
Website	www.meadowwood.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with physical and neurological needs.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is part of a hard federation in partnership with another local special school with a shared governing body.
- The headteacher and senior leaders oversee both schools.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Due to the nature of the specialist curriculum, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas: communication, language and reading, physical education and physical development, and PSHE (through the school's life skills curriculum). In each area,

inspectors met with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and looked at pupils' folders of their achievements.

- In addition, inspectors sampled case studies of pupils by looking at their individualised curriculum plans, personal targets, reviewing a sample of EHC plans and speaking with pupils where appropriate.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans and sampled lessons in numeracy, mathematics and understanding the world.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders over both days of inspection.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the co-chairs of the governing body.
- The lead inspector had a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. He scrutinised training records and policies, and looked closely at safeguarding systems, processes and records. Across both days of inspection, he spoke to pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding.
- The lead inspector considered the 14 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 14 free-text responses. The lead inspector also considered 25 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Webb

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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