

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Meadowfield School

Swanstree Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4NL

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Inspection dates:

16 to 17 April 2024

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils from early years to sixth form are happy to come to this caring school. They arrive to a warm welcome from staff and are eager to get to class to join in with morning activities. Well-established daily routines create a safe and harmonious environment for pupils. Staff make sure that pupils' well-being is a high priority. Every pupil is treated as a unique individual whose needs and interests are well understood. Consequently, they thrive. The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and understands that behaviour is a form of communication. Staff provide personalised strategies to help pupils achieve success in their learning.

The school is sharply focused on making sure that pupils are well prepared for their futures. They make use of their fleet of minibuses to take pupils out for activities in the community. Visits to cafes and shops help pupils apply their learning in the real world. This also helps pupils manage any worries they may have about going to different places and helps them experience new sounds and people. Parents appreciate this, and some report that this has been a significant factor in enabling them to participate in swimming or shopping trips outside of school as a family.

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

Over time, pupil numbers have grown, and the range of needs of the cohort of pupils has become more diverse. Leaders have focused on identifying and actioning priorities for improvement. To meet pupils' individual needs and offer a personalised education, the school has designed a multi-pathway curriculum. As well as studying a breadth of academic subjects, targets from pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) are carefully woven into daily lessons. Targets are meticulously organised and tracked to

make sure that pupils make ambitious progress. Children in the early years get off to a strong start and their needs are swiftly and carefully assessed. Highly skilled adults adapt the early year foundation curriculum to deliver irresistible learning and play opportunities to the children. Children flourish in the well-resourced environment. Pupils study vocational courses at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Practical experience helps to develop pupils' aspirations for future employment and study.

Pupils have a wide range of learning, pastoral and medical needs. Their individual needs are identified, well understood and diligently provided for. Targets or programmes recommended by physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language and other specialists are carefully integrated into daily lessons. Pupils' learning, independence and personal development are supported well through the use of appropriate communication aids. However, more widely, there is some variability in staff's expertise to deliver some of the specialist methods that underpin learning. For example, there is some inconsistency across the school in the use of symbols, signing, sensory cues or language for emotional literacy. This means that pupils may have to relearn some approaches when working in different departments of the school.

Developing pupils' reading and enjoyment of books is a top priority. Based on research, the school has organised a highly effective reading curriculum. Staff are expertly trained to teach pupils pre-reading skills and then sounds and letters. The books these pupils read match the sounds they are learning. This helps them to become fluent readers over time. Older pupils develop favourite authors and genres and enjoy books. Staff creatively bring stories to life using sensory techniques to stimulate pupils' engagement. For example, a storytelling activity in an immersive sensory room supported younger children to become absorbed in 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt', exploring grassy textures and learning through play.

The school works diligently to overcome any barriers to attendance that pupils may face. Pupils attend well because they do not want to miss out on any of the opportunities that the school provides. The regular trips out help pupils learn about being safe in the community. They are also to stay safe online. Pupils develop their leadership skills by representing their fellow pupils on the school council. Sixth-form students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and others are proud of their work as part of an arts award. From the early years onwards, children keenly learn about the different jobs that people do.

The school has high aspirations for students in the sixth form to move on to further education, employment or volunteering. Leaders are implementing their clear plans to further improve the vocational opportunities on offer for pupils to work in the community as part of the curriculum offer. A variety of well-considered work and enterprise opportunities are threaded through the curriculum at every opportunity. Pupils receive specialised guidance to help them make informed decisions about future careers and education.

Routines are exceptionally well embedded. Pupils are happy, content and secure because they know what is expected of them. When some pupils experience difficulty in managing their emotions, staff provide the sensitive support to help them calm again. Detailed and

personalised pupil well-being plans are shared and reviewed. This makes sure everyone knows the precise strategies to use with pupils if they need extra help. Creative use of outdoor spaces or dedicated sensory rooms and equipment motivate and engage pupils. Lessons are carefully planned to include movement breaks, active learning or multi-sensory experiences. This results in pupils being well regulated and highly engaged in their learning.

Most staff feel that leaders support them well. Staff's professional needs are high priority for leaders, and there is an extensive and impressive range of training available. However, this training does not always fully match all of the schools' priorities. Leaders and governors have a sharp focus on identifying areas for improvement in the school. For example, they are committed to their work to fully establish positive partnerships with parents.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school has not yet identified the core teaching approaches that they expect staff to use to support pupils' access to learning. This means that across the school, pupils' experiences are variable, and they are not as well supported to access learning as they could be. The school should ensure that staff are fully trained to implement the agreed methods consistently and in line with leaders' high expectations.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in November 2014.

## **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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134783
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10313726
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Foundation special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	413
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Roberta Kane
<b>Principal</b>	Angela Howe
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.meadowfield.kent.sch.uk">www.meadowfield.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	12 to 13 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils between the ages of three and 19 years who have speech, language and communication difficulty, autism, physical disability, moderate learning difficulty, severe learning difficulty and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- Pupil numbers have significantly increased since the last full inspection.
- The school has Nursery provision on site, which offers observation and assessment.
- Sixteen pupils attend off-site resourced provision based in Sunny Bank Primary School. Pupils spend each morning in the resourced provision classes, where they follow the Meadowfield curriculum taught by Meadowfield staff. They then spend some afternoons in mainstream classes, supported by Meadowfield staff

- The school manages and provides an outreach specialist teaching and learning service for the local authority. This includes supporting teachers in other schools. A training programme is also offered to teachers, covering many aspects related to special education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governor meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.

## Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Neave

Ofsted Inspector

Graham Chisnell

Ofsted Inspector

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