

The Meadows

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Pupils make outstanding progress. They enter the school with skills and knowledge much lower than expected for their age. The vast majority leave having achieved GCSE passes in English, mathematics and a variety of other subjects.
- Pupils enter the school with complex behavioural, emotional and mental health needs. Staff ensure that pupils feel and are kept safe and receive help to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils leave with a plan for either a future career or move into further education and training.
- The headteacher has extremely high expectations of pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning. She is unrelenting in her desire for the pupils to succeed, despite their previous negative educational and social experiences.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure that pupils engage with their learning fully. Frequent assessments ensure that any pupil who is falling behind receives extra help and support promptly.
- Staff ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum is on offer. Pupils experience subjects and topics that motivate them and suit their individual needs and interests.
- Pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Incidents of low-level disruption and bullying are extremely rare.
- Pupils' rates of attendance increase dramatically when compared with their attendance at their previous school or setting.
- Pupils are safe and happy. Relationships between adults and pupils are extremely positive. Adults know pupils very well.
- The headteacher and proprietors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- At the time of the inspection, some policies were out of date.
- The school does not have links with other schools and similar settings to share good practice and ensure that policies are up to date.

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?

- Create links with other schools and similar settings to share good practice and to ensure that policies are kept up to date.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has created a culture of high expectation of excellent achievement for both pupils and staff. While there is an understanding that pupils have undergone previous traumatic experiences, have had limited education and many have complex social and emotional needs, the headteacher is adamant that these should not be barriers to learning and excuses for failing.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of the complex emotional, behavioural and social needs of pupils. They work carefully, patiently and calmly to ensure that pupils attend school frequently, behave impeccably and make outstanding progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher accurately knows the strengths of the school and those areas that require further improvement. For example, the school has recently been working to improve the use of therapeutic interventions for pupils who require emotional support.
- The headteacher has ensured that there is a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils are taught a range of subjects, including the humanities, art and physical education. There are also opportunities for pupils to learn individual subjects that interest them, such as Italian, law, economics, equine care and psychology.
- Pupils are prepared extremely well for life in modern Britain. For example, they deepen their knowledge and understanding of British values in citizenship lessons. In addition, pupils' visits to a local synagogue and mosque have enabled them to learn about faiths different from their own.
- The headteacher has ensured that the extra funding used to support pupils is allocated and monitored very effectively. The funding is targeted to individuals and their specific needs. This extra support contributes to the outstanding progress made by pupils, both emotionally and educationally, during their time at The Meadows.
- Pupils' individual education plans are appropriate and are reviewed frequently. These help to ensure that pupils receive effective support, both emotionally and educationally. These plans contribute positively to pupils' outstanding progress and attainment.
- Staff, and parents and carers, are equally glowing with praise about the school. Comments such as, 'The school has enabled the young person to achieve a level of attainment that will support her achieving higher outcomes than she had previously achieved at other settings,' and, 'My daughter is safe here and is making much better progress than has previously been the case', reflect the very positive views of parents and carers.
- The headteacher has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is made available for parents on the school's website. The policy meets the required independent school standards.
- The headteacher and proprietors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

- The school does not have any links with other schools or with similar settings. There are, therefore, limited opportunities for staff to share good practice, and to ensure that policies are kept up to date.

Governance

- The proprietors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring development. This is because they work at the school every day and are involved in any subsequent meetings and discussions. The proprietors are, therefore, quickly aware of any issues that may arise.
- The proprietors have recently arranged for an independent educational adviser to offer an external review of the school. Lately, the adviser has undertaken a review of the headteacher's performance and set appropriate targets for the current academic year. This is in response to a development area from the previous inspection report.
- The proprietors have rightly identified that the school would benefit from creating links with other schools and similar settings. This would enable the headteacher and teachers to share good practice and ensure that policies are kept up to date.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead has received appropriate training in such areas as the safer recruitment of staff, spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation, and neglect and female genital mutilation. Teachers have also received this training.
- Teachers are fully aware of the procedures to follow should they have a concern regarding the welfare of a pupil. Any concerns are shared swiftly with the designated safeguarding lead and with staff from the care home. There are excellent links with various outside agencies, including the police, the vulnerable persons unit, Derbyshire child and adolescent mental health service, an educational psychologist and a psychiatrist.
- Communication between teachers and care home staff is very good. A morning 'huddle' and daily written logs allow for the detailed sharing of information between the two sets of staff. Vital information that may have occurred overnight is therefore passed on, for teachers to alter their plans for the day, as necessary.
- The proprietor has ensured that all relevant checks are made on adults before they are allowed to work at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils enter the school with complex emotional, social and mental health difficulties. They have had negative experiences at their previous schools and settings and have also missed large sections of the curriculum. Pupils therefore enter the school with a lot less knowledge and far fewer skills than would be expected for their age.
- Adults are extremely skilled in settling pupils quickly into routines, earning their trust and ensuring that they are ready to learn. Bespoke programmes of intervention are designed to support pupils behaviourally, emotionally and socially. These include equine therapy,

sessions with an educational psychologist and a psychiatrist, and walks around the surrounding countryside with Jip, the school's dog.

- Teachers possess strong subject knowledge and consistently promote high standards. For example, during a science lesson, the teacher insisted that pupils use the correct scientific vocabulary of digestion, respiration and decomposition when learning about the carbon cycle.
- Pupils are very engaged in their work because tasks and activities are well planned and teachers use appropriate resources. In science, pupils enjoyed taking part in an experiment to show the existence of carbon dioxide and the subsequent chemical reaction that occurred with another substance.
- Teachers insist on high standards. They encourage pupils to try their very best and contribute fully in lessons. Pupils respond to these high expectations by producing work that is neat and well presented. Pupils take great pride in their work.
- Pupils answer teachers' questions readily and eagerly. They have the confidence to read aloud in front of others and discuss specific elements from texts. In one example, a teacher and pupil were observed maturely discussing the characters from the book, 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'. As a result of this discussion, it was correctly identified that, 'Two characters are the same age and were born on the same day. The author is trying to make the characters have something in common.'
- Teachers ensure that subjects are covered appropriately and in detail. In mathematics, pupils deepen their knowledge and skills in areas such as calculating area, negative numbers, fractions and decimals. In science, pupils have studied various topics, which have covered learning about atoms, elements, compounds, alloys and fossil fuels.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and frequently. Consequently, teachers know pupils' strengths and next steps very well. For example, when writing a book review, a pupil was reminded to use capital letters consistently and accurately.
- Teachers give pupils feedback in line with the school's policy. The majority of this is instant, verbal feedback during lessons, although pupils correct spellings and errors when solving mathematical calculations.
- Parents and carers receive frequent, detailed reports about their child. They provide information regarding a pupil's attendance and grades for their effort, behaviour, homework and organisation. Teachers provide comments on pupils' progress in various subjects and set targets for future improvements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils display significant improvements in their attitudes to learning and their willingness to participate positively, when compared with their previous school or setting.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are extremely positive. They consistently treat each other with mutual respect and courtesy.

- Pupils state that they feel safe and the school teaches them to stay safe in a variety of contexts, including when online. Pupils are aware, for example, that they should keep personal information private and not share it with others when using social media.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are significantly higher than when compared with those at their previous school or setting. It is not uncommon for pupils to have missed out on whole academic years or key stages before starting at the school.
- The school provides pupils with impartial careers advice and guidance. During key stage 4, pupils have the opportunity to undertake meaningful and appropriate work experience placements. A local college careers adviser visits the pupils to carefully plan the next steps in their education, employment or training.
- A suggestion box gives pupils the opportunity to contribute ideas about how the school could be improved. Leaders are sensitive to any ideas pupils suggest and make appropriate changes, including to the school's timetable, where such changes help the pupils in their learning or their personal development.
- Pupils benefit from visiting local places of interest to broaden their knowledge and skills. For example, a recent visit to a museum helped pupils to understand further the 'history of medicine' topic for their GCSE biology course.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct throughout the school day is exemplary. They follow teachers' instructions and requests quickly and without fuss.
- Pupils state that instances of bullying and low-level disruption are extremely rare. They are confident that if any poor behaviour did occur, it would be dealt with swiftly and fairly.
- Pupils respond well to praise and enjoy the daily points and rewards they receive for displaying positive behaviour and attitudes to work. Teachers consistently follow the school's behaviour policy.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils typically enter the school having previously had a significant period of time out of full-time education. They have often experienced severe emotional, mental health and social difficulties, leading to them having knowledge and skills that are much lower than those typically expected for their age.
- Pupils settle quickly into the school's routines and attend frequently. This, combined with the positive ethos and high expectations set by the headteacher and teachers, ensure that pupils make outstanding progress from low, and sometimes very low, starting points.
- Pupils swiftly achieve qualifications at level 1 or 2 in functional skills English and mathematics before moving on to various GCSE curriculums during key stage 4. Recently, the vast majority of pupils achieved at least grade 4 (formerly grade C) at GCSE in, for example, English, mathematics, geography, religious studies and science. This represents outstanding progress from pupils' different starting points.

- The recent change to the school's status, allowing pupils to stay at the school until they are 18, has given the opportunity for the study of A levels, should this be suitable for any pupil.
- The headteacher and teachers are well aware of pupils' future ambitions. Consequently, staff ensure that appropriate subjects, timetables, qualifications and careers advice are in place for each individual pupil. Pupils are therefore well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	135241
DfE registration number	830/6035
Inspection number	10053978

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 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	David and Pamela Cathcart
Chair	David Cathcart
Headteacher	Rachel Dowle
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,276
Telephone number	01298 814000
Website	www.countrycare.org.uk
Email address	rachel.dowle@countrycare.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 November 2015

Information about this school

- The Meadows School is a small, independent day school owned by Country Care. It specialises in providing full-time education for pupils who are in the care of their local authorities and who live in residential accommodation provided by the company.
- The school is registered to admit up to eight pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties, in the age range of 11 to 18 years. There are currently three pupils in Year 11 and one pupil in Year 9 on the school roll.
- The school was granted a material change in January 2016. The school is now registered to provide education for girls aged 11 to 18 years, an increase from 11 to 16 years.

- The school was last inspected in November 2015.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The aim of the school is to 'raise academic attainment and provide a wide range of opportunities for achievement, within a safe, stable, structured and warm therapeutic environment.'

Information about this inspection

- Ofsted announced the inspection to the headteacher the day before the inspection began.
- The inspector observed the learning in four lessons and examined a wide variety of pupils' workbooks from a range of subjects.
- The inspector held a range of meetings, including with the headteacher, the proprietors, two teachers, the therapist, and a parent. He also held a telephone conversation with an educational consultant employed by the school. The inspector also spoke with two pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to the curriculum, assessment, pupils' progress, school improvement planning and records relating to safeguarding.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's Parent View free-text service and pupils' questionnaires. Eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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