

The Meadows

Beech Lane, Dove Holes, Derbyshire SK17 8DJ

Inspection dates

24–25 November 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Proprietors, headteacher and staff work extremely effectively together to ensure that all aspects of the school's provision are of the highest standard.
- Proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Pupils enter the school with complex emotional and social difficulties. While in the school they experience security, a sense of belonging, and high aspirations which enable them to confidently address their barriers to learning.
- Senior leaders and staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve in their learning and personal development. Pupils respond positively to the faith placed in them.
- Pupils make outstanding progress, often from low starting points, as a result of the excellent quality of teaching. Teachers understand how to lead and encourage pupils to work willingly towards GCSE examination success.
- The school provides a safe environment for pupils. Staff give excellent attention to the reduction of risk-taking behaviour and the development of positive attitudes among the pupils.
- Outstanding personal commitment, strong teamwork and dedication have ensured that the school has maintained its exemplary standards since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders and staff are reflective about their work and strive continuously to provide wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to achieve and mature.
- Pupils' work is assessed accurately and regularly. Pupils know how well they are doing but the extent of their progress over time is not routinely evaluated against national expectations
- Proprietors are very well informed about the school's successes and any areas for further improvement. However, they do not have any procedures for an external, independent review of the school's work.

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?

- Include an independent view of the school's performance within the school's existing arrangements for review and self-evaluation.
- Evaluate the extent of pupils' progress from their different starting points, compared with national expectations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, working closely with the proprietors and staff, has established a culture of success. Together, they promote high expectations which motivate pupils to succeed. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to improving achievement and life chances for disadvantaged young people.
- The success of the school is based on excellent working relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils respect their teachers, care workers and therapists because they recognise how everyone works together to support, challenge and encourage them.
- The headteacher and staff keep the curriculum and learning opportunities for pupils under continuous review. Good opportunities are available for staff to undertake further training to address school priorities. They have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- Staff understand the complex barriers to learning which have had a negative impact on pupils' previous achievements. They work patiently and resolutely to ensure that pupils are provided with the best possible opportunities to achieve their best.
- The school makes excellent provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils are placed at the school because they have complex and challenging emotional and mental health difficulties. The school places a strong emphasis on addressing these issues through effective strategies for pupils' personal development
- The school is a therapeutic community in which personal care and effective learning are combined to enable pupils to develop their self-esteem and increased independence.
- The curriculum and activities of daily life in school promote fundamental British values extremely well. Pupils are helped to appreciate the values of democracy and participation in decision-making. They learn to respect the wisdom and experience of adults while taking increasing responsibility for their own decisions and actions.
- Pupils develop respect for their own and other lifestyles, appreciating the diversity of beliefs and cultures present in the school and the wider community. They contribute positively to the community, for example through organising a range of charitable events and collections.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The proprietors maintain a continuous close working relationship with the headteacher. They are well informed about the school's successes and are very supportive of new developments.
 - The proprietors' evaluation of the work of the school is appropriately informed through management team meetings, appraisal of the work of staff and feedback from parents and external partners.
 - Proprietors' arrangements for school self-evaluation are not sufficiently informed by independent evidence to support their judgements about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
 - The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust procedures are in place for the appointment of suitable staff, training in child protection and first aid, and ensuring rigorous practice in premises and fire safety.
- Senior leaders have established robust arrangements to ensure that the views of parents, carers and external agencies are regularly taken into account. Decisions about pupils' welfare and safety, together with any adjustments to provision, are fully informed by the views of all appropriate stakeholders.
- Parents, placing local authorities and their representatives speak highly about the quality of the school's work and the thoroughness with which regular communication is maintained.
- It is recommended that the school's request for a material change to increase the age range to include learners aged 16 to 18 years, be approved. The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the change is implemented.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Pupils enter the school with negative previous experiences of school. Their attendance has been poor and their complex emotional and mental health challenges have prevented them from completing parts of the curriculum to the standard of which they are capable.
- Once they have settled into the relationships and expectations of the school, pupils enjoy their learning

and respond very positively to the range of opportunities provided for them. The school's expectations of what they can achieve are high and communicated clearly to them.

- Teachers have an excellent understanding of how pupils learn. They are sensitive to the characteristics and behaviours of each pupil and take these into account in the way they plan and manage learning activities.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements and quickly develop the confidence to demonstrate what they know and understand. Pupils in a GCSE science lesson, for example, contributed their knowledge of the periodic table and quickly worked out how elements and compounds react together.
- Teachers plan effective learning activities which build at an appropriate pace on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to work systematically through problems in mathematics such as working out the income tax payable on different monthly incomes, or tackling new concepts related to ratios and proportions.
- Teachers monitor pupils' work continuously and make well-judged interventions to assist pupils or to increase the pace of learning when required. Appropriate time is provided for pupils to consolidate and reinforce their understanding while ensuring that a suitable level of challenge is provided.
- A clear commitment to equality of opportunity underpins all decisions made about pupils' access to courses and accreditation.
- Pupils who may have missed significant periods of previous learning are given the confidence to tackle GCSE examination preparation across a range of subjects. Pupils are enabled to develop perseverance and resilience to tackle external examinations at appropriate times during Key Stage 4.
- All pupils at Key Stage 4 work towards GCSE accreditation in English, mathematics and science. These courses are supplemented with additional subjects such as history, law or religious education, related to pupils' individual interests.
- Opportunities are also provided for pupils to enter for functional skills level 1 and 2 awards as stepping stones towards the more demanding GCSE awards. Pupils also enjoy a good range of practical and vocational courses, including health and social care, child development, equine assisted learning and preparation for working life.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning when they are confident to do so. For example, by drawing up a chart to plan the units of work to be covered in child development over the rest of the school year. They are interested in their work, and willing to ask questions and seek further help in working through assignments.
- Teachers mark pupils' work with care and provide them with written advice about how they may improve their work. Work is assessed regularly and teachers have a good understanding of the level at which each pupil is currently working towards their examination entries.
- Pupils' progress over time is not analysed in a way which supports an easy assessment of whether they are making appropriate rates of progress from their various starting points compared with national expectations. The relatively short-term placements of some pupils present a particular challenge in making such judgements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate excellent improvement in their attitudes to learning and their willingness to engage positively compared with their experience in previous placements.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual trust. Pupils who have often found it difficult to develop secure relationships respond positively to the care and support provided by the staff. They value the respect shown to them, including the opportunity to demonstrate success in accredited courses.
- Pupils get on well together. The school's records, and pupils' questionnaire responses, show that they have no concerns about bullying or aggressive behaviour.
- Pupils are taught about safe lifestyles and are continuously supported to keep safe. The staff place a strong emphasis on the development of appropriate relationships and pupils' awareness of external threats to their well-being.
- The school has developed a robust relationship with the local careers service. Each pupil is supported well with impartial advice and the opportunity to consider a suitable range of options for further study and

employment beyond the school leaving age.

- Pupils continue to address their individual emotional challenges or mental health issues. Staff are very sensitive and considerate in making well-considered temporary adjustments to individual timetables to enable pupils to work through their concerns and to develop personal coping strategies. The school's therapeutic team make a strong contribution to strategies to develop pupils' emotional resilience.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Their attitudes to work in classrooms and in practical courses are exemplary. They focus well on the tasks presented and sustain their concentration throughout lessons.
- Staff have created a calm and orderly environment within the school. Pupils recognise that they are there to learn and they welcome the opportunity to concentrate without interruption. Disruption and distraction from learning are rare.
- Pupils' attendance is at or above the national average and there is very little unauthorised absence. An excellent working relationship with pupils' residential staff provides a consistent approach to expectations and daily routines.
- Pupils demonstrate their increasing maturity when attending activities off-site. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to take part in physical, outdoor and recreational activities. These make an important contribution to pupils' awareness of appropriate behaviours in wider social settings.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils enter the school with low academic starting points for their age, as a result of the variety of barriers to learning and attendance which they have experienced previously.
- Some pupils are placed at the school for relatively short periods of time, for example to provide a suitable intervention at a time of crisis. The majority of recent and current pupils have attended the school for sufficient time to engage in a meaningful and rewarding educational experience.
- The positive ethos and high expectations enable pupils to make outstanding progress with their learning. For the majority, this is a very challenging process and contrasts significantly with their previous recent experience.
- Pupils make strong and sustained progress across a range of subjects and experiences. Their progress from their various starting points meets or exceeds national expectations in English and mathematics. They demonstrate confidence with their reading, speaking and listening skills. Their handwriting and presentation of work are excellent.
- These disadvantaged pupils improve rapidly towards the standards achieved nationally by other pupils with similar starting points. Despite their relatively low starting points, pupils achieve creditable success in externally accredited examinations.
- Pupils in Year 11 have already achieved Level 1 or 2 qualifications in functional skills English and mathematics, together with a small number of foundation level grades in GCSE examinations. They are now working towards awards in a range of subjects with the potential to achieve higher-level GCSE grades.
- Recent pupils achieved higher-grade awards in a variety of subjects, including English language and literature, mathematics, science, health and social care, preparation for working life, and history. These results represent outstanding progress during their time in the school.
- The school, working very closely with pupils' residential care staff and therapists, is very successful at enabling pupils to achieve commendable outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils are helped to develop the self-confidence and determination to overcome their barriers to successful learning and to take important steps on the way towards mature adulthood.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 135241 |
| Inspection number | 10006017 |
| DfE registration number | 830/6035 |

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.

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| Type of school | Day special school |
| School status | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 years |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 3 |
| Number of part time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | David and Pamela Cathcart |
| Chair | David Cathcart |
| Headteacher | Rachel Dowle |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £40,976 |
| Telephone number | 01298 814000 |
| Website | www.countrycare.org.uk |
| Email address | rachel.dowle@countrycare.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 March 2012 |

Information about this school

- The Meadows is a small independent day special 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 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, in the age range 11 to 16 years. There are currently three pupils in Key Stage 4 on the roll of the school. All have been permanently excluded or withdrawn from their previous school placements.
- The school was last inspected in March 2012.
- The curriculum includes a variety of off-site activities but the school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school aims to 'give every pupil a sense of self-belief by giving each one opportunities to experience success' and 'to provide opportunities to develop social skills, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness that will help them to become constructive members of society'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning and looked at samples of written and practical work across a range of subjects taught at Key Stage 4.
- Pupils' and parents' responses to questionnaires were taken into consideration, together with the views of representatives of the placing local authorities. Informal conversations took place with pupils and with members of staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Conversations were held with the headteacher, who is also a director, and with one of the joint proprietors.
- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to consider the school's application to make a material change to its registration. The requested change was to increase the age range of the school to include pupils up to the age of 18 years.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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