

Inspection of Meadowcroft School

24 Bar Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 4AD

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school where pupils can make a positive new start to their education. There are high aspirations. The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Most pupils achieve an impressive range of academic and vocational qualifications by the time they leave the school.

Pupils establish positive and trusting relationships with staff. They are safe and well cared for. They learn to behave well because skilled staff help pupils to recognise and manage their emotions. Pupils develop effective strategies to regulate their behaviour.

Sixth-form students receive an excellent quality of education. The curriculum is carefully designed to support each student to achieve their absolute best. Students receive high-quality support and guidance with their chosen curriculum pathways. All go on to successful destinations in further education or employment.

The school's work to support pupils' personal development is aspirational. The 'STAR' values of self-belief, trust, aspiration and respect, strongly underpin the school's approach to supporting pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils develop life skills and broaden their understanding of the world. They take part in an array of trips and experiences. These include trips to museums and the theatre. Older pupils enjoy activities linked to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, such as rock climbing, caving and canoeing.

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

Most pupils join the school having missed considerable periods of education. Many lack the confidence and motivation to engage in school life. Staff assess pupils' needs thoroughly. They work closely with external professionals and parents and carers to gain a good understanding of pupils' barriers to education. Staff use this information to tailor learning to meet pupils' individual needs. They create precise targets for pupils to achieve. These targets link well to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils enjoy small group and, sometimes, one-to-one teaching and support. They engage well in lessons. Staff adapt lessons to motivate pupils and help them to learn in a way that suits them best.

The curriculum is clearly sequenced. Curriculum content for all subjects, including vocational subjects, is structured to build pupils' knowledge and skills well. The mathematics curriculum has been revised and strengthened. Pupils now have opportunities to revisit and apply essential mathematical knowledge on a regular basis.

Reading is promoted well across the school. Pupils read every day. They enjoy reading. They like the range of books available to them in school. There is a strong emphasis on the development of phonics for reading. When necessary, extra phonics teaching and reading practise help pupils who struggle to read to catch up. However,

the teaching of phonics is inconsistent. Some pupils do not make the progress they should in developing their early reading skills. Leaders are aware of this issue. They have suitable plans in place to train staff to develop their expertise in the teaching of phonics.

Sixth-form students benefit from a curriculum that is designed and tailored for each student's individual interests and career aspirations. Students gain a wealth of relevant qualifications. Leaders make sure that the courses individual students choose will support their future learning and life skills. Students are extremely well prepared for independence in adulthood. They develop the skills they need to pursue their aspirations. Their attendance is excellent. Their behaviour exemplary. All sixth-form students go on to access further education or employment that meets their needs well.

Improving pupils' attendance is an essential part of the school's work. There are rigorous procedures in place. Leaders promote the importance of regular attendance. They work with pupils to help them to understand the importance of education for their future lives. This work is having a positive impact on the attendance of some pupils. However too many pupils continue to miss essential learning and social experiences due to their persistent absence.

There is a strong curriculum to support pupils' personal development. It is precisely matched to outcomes detailed in pupils' EHC plans. The curriculum is supported well and enriched by the expertise of the school's clinical team. This team includes a range of professionals who provide strong and specific support to meet pupils' diverse learning and pastoral needs. They do so in a timely and effective way. Pupils learn essential life skills. These include financial management and how to cope with potential risks to their safety, such as from fraud, coercion or risks from alcohol.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is thread through the curriculum. Pupils learn about equality and diversity. They develop a deep understanding of the importance of respect for those with protected characteristics. They learn about equality and the value of empathy for others. Pupils take on positions of responsibility, such as members of the school council. They organise events such as litter picking in the local community and fundraising, including for the local foodbank. Pupils receive excellent independent careers advice and guidance. There is an exemplary programme in place to promote further education, employment or training options. Older pupils enjoy taking part in work experience that is astutely tailored to their interests and potential career options.

Leaders consider the workload and well-being of staff. Most are proud to work at the school. Most parents speak highly of the school and typically praise the positive difference it has made to their children's lives. Members of the proprietorial board and governors are knowledgeable. They ensure that the school meets the independent school standards. Pupils are appropriately supervised at different times across the school's site throughout the school day. The proprietor ensures that there are frequent checks on the health, safety and welfare of pupils.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to keep pupils safe. Strategies and policies for dealing with behaviour and bullying are suitable. The school's safeguarding policy, which reflects the latest guidance, is available on the school's website. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Persistent absence is an ongoing high priority for the school. Too many pupils miss essential learning, which has a detrimental impact on their education and social development. Leaders should redouble their efforts to ensure that parents understand that persistent absence can disadvantage their children educationally and socially.
- The teaching of phonics is inconsistent across the school. This means that some pupils may not make the progress in phonics that they should. The school should ensure that all staff are trained to teach phonics so that pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to become confident readers.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	135216
DfE registration number	384/6348
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10304582
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Noreen Cheema
Annual fees (day pupils)	£62,775
Telephone number	01924 366 242
Website	www.meadowcroftschoo.com
Email address	info@meadowcroftschoo.com
Dates of previous inspection	29 June to 1 July 2021

Information about this school

- Since the last standard inspection, the school has acquired an additional premises. The school now consists of four sites within the centre of Wakefield. All these sites are part of Meadowcroft School. The registered address for the school is known as 'The Hub'. The other three sites are located at The Works, Garden Street, Wakefield WF1 1DX and The Gallery, Wentworth Terrace, Wakefield WF1 3QW and The Lodge, 2 Leeds Road, Wakefield WF1 3JT.
- A material change inspection to increase the number of pupils on the school's roll took place in January 2023. The school was judged likely to meet the relevant independent school standards that were checked during the material change inspection.
- The school is registered to admit 146 pupils.
- The school does not use any providers of alternative education.
- Meadowcroft School provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and pupils with autism. Some pupils have additional moderate learning difficulties and some have complex learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the last standard inspection, several new staff have joined the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, three assistant headteachers, the designated leaders for safeguarding, the facilities manager, the leader with oversight of special educational needs and/or disabilities, the special educational needs coordinator for The Lodge site, the school business manager, some curriculum leaders and some teachers. Inspectors also met with the director of operations for the proprietor, who is also the chair of the governing body, the chair of the proprietor body, some staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, catering and motor mechanics. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to

teaching staff and spoke to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to some pupils reading.

- Inspectors met with the curriculum leaders for history and PSHE, scrutinised leaders' planning and looked at samples of pupils' work for these subjects.
- The lead inspector toured all four of the school's sites with the executive headteacher and the facilities manager.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors checked the implementation of risk assessment and health and safety policies, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents, pupils and staff. Inspectors met with some parents during the inspection, considered some written comments from parents sent to the school for inspectors during the inspection and spoke informally to some parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Patricia Head	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector

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