



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Meadowbank Special School
Colwill Road
Gabalfa
Cardiff
CF14 2QQ**

Date of inspection: November 2013

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Meadowbank School is a local authority special school, maintained by Cardiff Council. It provides day education for 30 pupils aged four to 11 years.

The school's motto is "learning and caring with friends".

All pupils have statements of special educational needs for their speech, language and communication difficulties. This means that the children have difficulties in the following areas:

- understanding or producing grammatical sentences;
- understanding or expressing meanings;
- understanding or using language for social communication;
- acquiring reading, writing and understanding written language;
- producing speech sounds; and
- discriminating speech sounds.

With very few exceptions, pupils live in Cardiff. Currently, there are 23 boys and seven girls. Approximately a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Currently, no pupils are looked-after by the local authority. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. Around 38% of pupils receive free school meals. This is slightly lower than the all Wales average of 42% for special schools.

Pupils are taught in classes that are broadly determined by pupils' need, ability level and age. It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse the performance trends of groups over time, because of the nature of the pupils' special educational needs.

The school was last inspected in 2007. The headteacher has been in post for seven years and the deputy headteacher was appointed in 2012.

The school, commissioned by the local authority, provides an outreach service to nursery providers in Cardiff. This provides support, advice and guidance in appropriate strategies in working with pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. This service was not included in the inspection of Meadowbank School.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

At Meadowbank, the overall current performance is good because:

- pupils make good progress, in line with their individual targets;
- pupils are confident in contributing to class discussions;
- pupils show a good understanding of how to keep healthy;
- nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about learning; and
- teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons, and signed speech is consistently used to reinforce spoken language.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement at Meadowbank are adequate because:

- leadership has successfully implemented the recommendations of the last inspection; and
- leaders have created an ethos in which all staff and pupils are valued.

However:

- there are different formats to record pupil progress, making it difficult for staff to track progress over time, as a result;
- leaders do not use data well enough to analyse pupil progress;
- staff do not have a clear enough understanding of the main strategic priorities of the school; and
- the role of the governing body in strategic planning is limited.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that curriculum planning is consistent in identifying the full range of skills to be taught
- R2 Ensure that all teaching reflects the best practice observed in the school, particularly in relation to differentiation and independent learning
- R3 Develop effective procedures to record and analyse performance data across all areas of learning
- R4 Strengthen improvement planning to include more focus on raising pupils' standards and robust arrangements to measure impact, and ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the school's priorities
- R5 Strengthen risk assessments, particularly in relation to the delivery of one-to-one interventions

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Pupils that attend the school have a range of needs in relation to speech, communication and language difficulties.

With very few exceptions, pupils, over time, make good progress in line with their abilities in relation to communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). They achieve the identified targets in their individual education plans.

All pupils use a signed speech programme to support their communication. Pupils use this consistently throughout the day. As a result, they improve their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils listen attentively to their classmates, and all pupils, including those with severe speech impairments, are confident in contributing to class discussions. This is a strong feature throughout the school.

Younger pupils learn to identify individual words. Older pupils are able to read text accurately and confidently.

All younger pupils follow a motor skills programme and make good progress in developing their early handwriting. However, the development of pupils' handwriting is not consistent as pupils progress through the school.

Because of an approach to develop pupils' numeracy related literacy skills, most pupils develop their understanding and use of number. Pupils are enthusiastic in singing and dancing number songs. However, abler pupils are not sufficiently challenged in developing their numeracy skills.

All pupils make effective use of ICT to develop their skills. For example, pupils have built 3D models that they use to create animations. They add commentaries to their work and use equipment with increasing confidence.

Pupils explore a range of different sound sources and enjoy practical opportunities to create sounds, for example using ICT and outdoor musical play equipment. In addition, a few develop their guitar playing skills.

There is no significant difference between the progress of pupils receiving free school meals and their peers or other groups within the school.

Enterprise week provides invaluable opportunities for pupils to experience working together in teams, making decisions on all aspects of setting up and running a business and visiting local businesses.

Older pupils make good progress in speaking Welsh. They clearly enjoy learning the language and are able to respond to simple questions. In addition, a few pupils, without prompting, use simple Welsh phrases in lessons.

Where appropriate, pupils successfully integrate into mainstream schools.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils enjoy school and attend very regularly. Pupil absence to attend medical appointments has been kept to a minimum as some specialist services are provided at the school.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know to whom to go if they have a problem or concern.

All pupils show a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe and they have positive attitudes towards food and exercise. For example, pupils sample new food and grow vegetables and fruit in their garden.

All pupils take part in regular physical exercise and older pupils develop their swimming skills. A few pupils participate in a keep-fit club at the school.

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. They pay good attention in class and are fully engaged in learning activities. They interact effectively with their peers and contribute well in lessons.

Most pupils use a variety of school play equipment during break-times. This helps to develop pupils' gross motor skills.

Pupils understand the importance of feelings and emotions. They use this understanding to modify how they behave and to become more tolerant of others.

The behaviour of pupils at Meadowbank is excellent. There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions for the past four years. All pupils are polite, courteous and considerate of others. They take pride in their school and their learning.

Pupils on the school council take their roles very seriously. For example, this has enabled them to extend the learning experiences of all pupils through the development of the orchard project. They develop social and life skills through participation in decisions and in representing the views of all pupils.

Many pupils have a clear understanding of their role within the community through links with local churches, libraries and schools. They also take part in fundraising for charities.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school successfully provides a broad and balanced curriculum. This is suitably adapted to meet the complex communication needs of the pupils.

The school has recently grouped pupils, according to ability, for numeracy lessons. This approach is beginning to have a positive effect on many pupils. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of this approach.

The school has prioritised the development of literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum. All pupils have individual language programmes. Speech and language therapists, teachers and support staff work together effectively, to plan and deliver activities.

The school has recently revised its approach to planning the curriculum to take into account the national literacy and numeracy framework. As a result, pupils' individual education plans have targets for numeracy and literacy. However, the planning of learning experiences is not always successful in engaging the full range of pupils.

The annual whole school Enterprise Week provides a good opportunity to develop wider key skills. Provision for the Welsh dimension includes the celebration of St David's Day and a four-day visit by a Welsh storyteller each year and support from the Athrawes Bro. These help pupils to understand the cultural and historical context of Wales. However, the planning for skills is not developed well enough across the curriculum.

The school makes good use of external grants to raise pupils' awareness of other countries and cultures. This includes designing tiles from a range of countries for the Our World display.

There are a range of clubs that enhance the pupils' learning, including the guitar, film and orchard gardening club.

The school has achieved three Eco flags. Provision to develop aspects of sustainable development is effective, with pupils regularly recycling and encouraging others to save energy.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons. Lessons are well structured, and there are clear expectations. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for abler pupils. Where lessons are excellent, teachers match work carefully to pupils' needs and abilities.

Appropriate resources are used, often tailor-made by the staff. Timed activities are used to good effect. They maintain pupils' interest and provide opportunities for pupils to respond.

The relationships between all staff and pupils are strong and foster an environment where pupils are secure and confident. Staff know pupils well and identify any emerging frustrations that pupils may have. Behaviour management is strength of the school.

In all lessons, pupils receive verbal feedback on their work. Teachers provide this feedback in a positive way that encourages pupils to improve.

In the few lessons that are adequate, the pace is too slow and the content limited. In these lessons, teachers miss opportunities to develop the independence of a minority of pupils.

Pupils have appropriate learning targets that are displayed in the classes in a child-friendly manner. All pupils know what is expected of them in relation to their learning and behaviour. The school fully meets the statutory requirements for recording and accrediting learners' achievements. Teachers collect a range of data on pupil progress. However, there are many files of information taking different formats. This makes it difficult to track pupils' progress over time.

Teachers keep parents informed about their child's progress using comprehensive and informative home school diaries. End-of-year reports are clear and consistent. Pupils and parents have the opportunity to respond to these.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are effective strategies to promote healthy eating and wellbeing. The school has achieved several awards, including phase four of the Healthy Schools programme and a tooth-brushing award. The Welsh Government's free breakfast initiative is in place at the school, with the majority of pupils taking advantage of the provision.

External providers of drama and sports are used to good effect to enhance further pupils' health and wellbeing and to provide additional opportunities for social interaction. Pupils have regular opportunities to take part in physical activities, for example swimming, dance and climbing.

The school makes appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is promoted successfully through class work and regular assemblies. The personal and social education programme helps pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem, and teaches them to show respect for each other. This provision gives pupils strategies to manage their emotions.

There are effective procedures in place to deal with issues of racism and bullying.

Staff have been trained in programmes that support the emotional needs of learners. Older pupils, for example, receive appropriate sessions on understanding what happens to their bodies as they grow up.

The multi-agency working to support the speech and language needs of the pupils is a strength of the school. In addition, the school runs a weekly signing class for parents and provides valuable information for parents on the school's website. This work is very effective in helping parents to support their child's communication needs.

Other specialists, for example qualified teachers of the visually impaired, provide support and advice to the school. This ensures that the needs of individual children are met.

The school has effective arrangements in place for supporting pupils' additional learning needs. All pupils have individual education plans and these include targets to develop numeracy and literacy skills. In addition, every pupil has an individual therapy intervention plan for his or her speech and language needs. Therapists and school staff work well in implementing these programmes, on an individual and small group basis. Teachers incorporate occupational therapy approaches into the learning activities of pupils.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community that provides positive learning opportunities for all pupils. There is equal access to the curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities, off-site visits and educational trips. Pupils are treated with respect. Staff celebrate good behaviour and consideration towards others.

Accommodation is spacious and well used. There is a range of specialist rooms, including a sensory room, pupils' kitchen, ICT suite and library. There are also additional spaces used for independent learning and sessions with speech and language therapists.

There are clear routines throughout the school. Pupils understand and respond well to these. They help to create an environment that is orderly and predictable for pupils.

Pupils' work, subject displays and photographs of trips create a lively and stimulating learning environment. Outside spaces are stimulating for learning and play. The school has a small gardening area that provides useful opportunities to support the curriculum.

Resources are of very good quality and appropriate to pupils' needs. There has been recent investment in computer tablets for use in each classroom.

The school buildings are well maintained and decorated.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Adequate
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Leadership: Adequate

The school's mission statement is to provide a happy, friendly, caring and safe environment where children can learn effectively. Leaders have created an ethos in which all pupils and staff are valued. They communicate high expectations, which result in a strong commitment by the staff.

However, the strategic direction provided by leaders does not focus clearly enough on raising standards. They do not use data effectively enough to analyse pupil progress, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions or plan strategically.

Roles and responsibilities within the school are clearly defined. The well-established distributed leadership enables teaching staff to take responsibility for different curriculum areas. Non-teaching staff also have opportunities to lead on a range of initiatives. However, staff do not have a clear enough shared understanding of the main strategic priorities for school improvement. Policies and initiatives are not applied consistently across the school. For example, although risk assessment arrangements are in place, leaders have not applied these to the teaching of pupils on a one-to-one or small group basis.

The governing body provides useful support and challenge for the school. It has an appropriate range of sub-committees with clear terms of reference. In addition, individual governors take responsibility for specific areas, for example child protection, special educational needs and health and safety issues, as well as a range of curricular areas. However, the involvement of the governing body in strategic planning is limited.

The school has a well-established system of performance management for teachers, teaching assistants and other non-teaching staff. Leaders use performance management effectively to identify and address individual staff training needs.

The school pays appropriate attention to local and national priorities, for example the literacy and numeracy framework.

Improving quality: Adequate

The school produces a detailed annual self-evaluation report. It seeks the views of pupils and parents through regular questionnaires. Governors and all staff contribute to the report. However, the contributions of staff are not fully developed. As a result, they do not wholly understand the strengths and areas for development at the school.

The school improvement plan and action plans identify a number of appropriate targets for the coming year. The plans clearly allocate responsibility for the delivery of actions, and include timescales for completion. However, actions and success criteria focus too much on provision and do not pay enough attention to outcomes.

The school collects a range of data on individual pupils. It is beginning to use this data to track pupils' progress over time. However, managers do not use this data well enough to identify strengths and areas for development, inform planning at a strategic level or evaluate the impact of interventions on standards.

Managers have recently introduced strategies to improve the school, for example by providing clear guidance on planning and marking, and introducing an assessment-tracking tool. This work is at an early stage of development but is already beginning to impact positively on provision in the school.

There are well-established procedures for regular classroom observation by senior managers. Teachers receive useful written feedback and clear actions for improvement. The school is beginning to develop opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to develop their knowledge and expertise through observing teaching and sharing good practice both within and beyond the school.

Partnership working: Good

The school works effectively with a wide range of partners to improve pupils' wellbeing and academic achievements. These include the local health authority, social services, educational psychologists and specialist teachers. Speech and language therapists and class teams work very well together to develop beneficial programmes of support, which impact positively on pupil outcomes.

There are good links with parents, who are encouraged to be partners in their children's learning in a variety of ways, for example by attending annual reviews, parents' evenings and class assemblies. A group of parents develop their signing skills through attendance at weekly classes. The 'Mates of Meadowbank' successfully raises funds to improve facilities and resources at the school, for example to provide a sensory room and computer tablets. These are used well by pupils.

The school has very effective integration and transition programmes with a number of local schools. Parents, professionals and schools are fully engaged in this process. This ensures successful learning and wellbeing outcomes for pupils as they move into mainstream primary and secondary education.

The school has several beneficial partnerships to support pupils' learning, for example with a specialist music teacher, artists in residence, dance projects, community police and local theatre groups. Older pupils perform in the annual dance festival at a local theatre.

Resource management: Good

The school has a good range of qualified and experienced teaching and support staff, who are deployed effectively to teach all aspects of the school curriculum.

Teachers receive appropriate, planning and preparation time.

There are effective procedures in place for the performance management of all teaching and non-teaching staff, which successfully identifies training needs.

Networks of professional practice develop staff expertise and raise standards in identified areas of learning linked to the Welsh Government's priorities. For example, projects on numeracy and personal and social development have had a positive impact on teaching and learning.

The school has a very good range of resources and specialist rooms that enhance pupils' learning experiences. However, the library is under used.

There are systematic and accurate budgeting procedures in place. Financial resources are allocated appropriately to improve the quality of pupils' learning and supporting specific developments. These are in part linked to the priorities in the school improvement plan. Evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives for improvement is still developing and does not always measure success in terms of the outcomes for pupils.

In view of the good standards achieved by pupils, the effective teaching and good quality of resources, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Special Questionnaire (Overall)

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
I feel safe in my school.	30	29 97%	1 3%	0 0%	Rwy'n teimlo'n ddiogel yn fy ysgol.
		96%	2%	2%	
The school deals well with any bullying.	30	30 100%	0 0%	0 0%	Mae'r ysgol yn delio'n dda ag unrhyw fwlio.
		89%	7%	5%	
I know who to talk to if I am worried or upset.	30	28 93%	0 0%	2 7%	Rwy'n gwybod pwy i siarad ag ef/â hi os ydw I'n poeni neu'n gofidio.
		93%	3%	4%	
The school teaches me how to keep healthy	30	30 100%	0 0%	0 0%	Mae'r ysgol yn fy nysgu i sut i aros yn iach.
		94%	3%	3%	
There are lots of chances at school for me to get regular exercise.	30	29 97%	1 3%	0 0%	Mae llawer o gyfleoedd yn yr ysgol i mi gael ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		96%	2%	2%	
I am doing well at school	30	29 97%	1 3%	0 0%	Rwy'n gwneud yn dda yn yr ysgol.
		95%	3%	2%	
The teachers and other adults in the school help me to learn and make progress.	30	29 97%	0 0%	1 3%	Mae'r athrawon a'r oedolion eraill yn yr ysgol yn fy helpu i ddysgu a gwneud cynnydd.
		99%	0%	1%	
I know what to do and who to ask if I find my work hard.	30	29 97%	0 0%	1 3%	Rwy'n gwybod beth I'w wneud a gyda phwy i siarad os ydw I'n gweld fy ngwaith yn anodd.
		95%	2%	2%	
My homework helps me to understand and improve my work in school.	30	29 97%	1 3%	0 0%	Mae fy ngwaith cartref yn helpu i mi ddeall a gwella fy ngwaith yn yr ysgol.
		77%	13%	10%	
I have enough books, equipment, and computers to do my work.	29	26 90%	3 10%	0 0%	Mae gen i ddigon o lyfrau, offer a chyfrifiaduron i wneud fy ngwaith.
		95%	4%	0%	
Other children behave well and I can get my work done.	30	27 90%	1 3%	2 7%	Mae plant eraill yn ymddwyn yn dda ac rwy'n gallu gwneud fy ngwaith.
		87%	7%	6%	
Nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunch time	29	26 90%	2 7%	1 3%	Mae bron pob un o'r plant yn ymddwyn yn dda amser chwarae ac amser cinio.
		87%	10%	3%	

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Huw Davies	Reporting Inspector
Caroline Rees	Team Inspector
Ann Dackevych	Team Inspector
Andrea Davies	Lay Inspector
Susan Lynne Painter	Peer Inspector
Lorraine Felstead	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of ALN terms

ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ALN: additional learning needs

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorders, includes Asperger's Syndrome

ATR: additional teacher resource

BESD, ESBD or SEBD: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties

CoP: Code of Practice

HI: hearing impairment

MSI: multi-sensory impairment

PMLD: profound and multiple learning difficulties

SpLD: specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia

VI: visual impairment