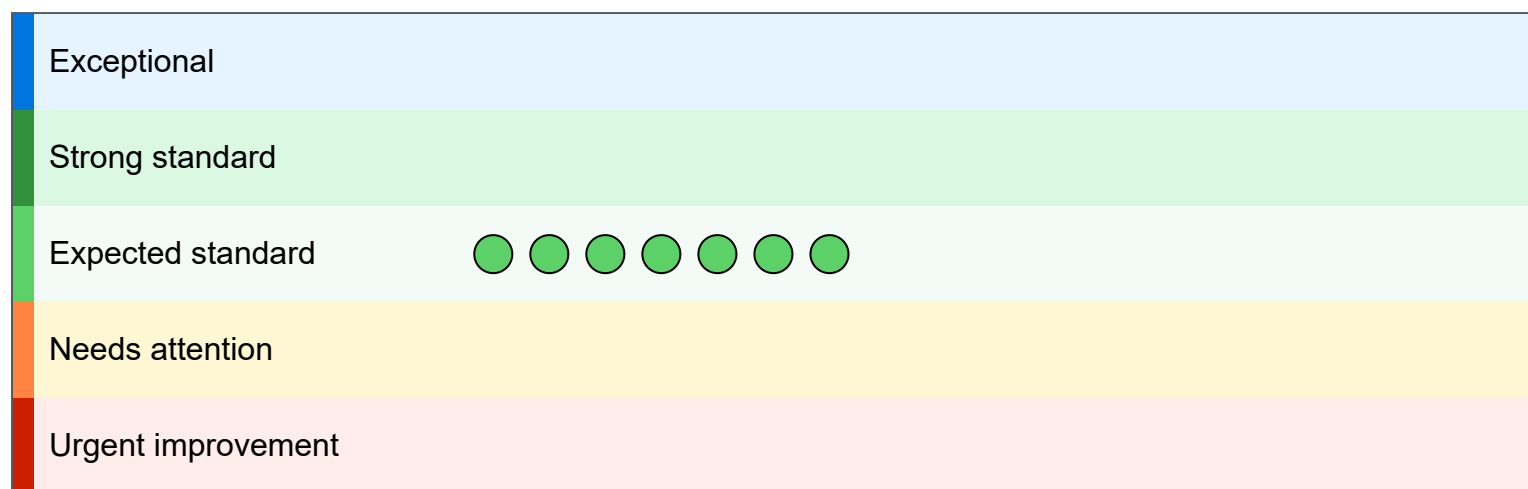


The Meadows School

Address: The Meadows School, Dudley Road East, Sandwell, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 3BU

Unique reference number (URN): 132231

Inspection report: 3 February 2026



✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils make steady progress from their starting points. Many develop improved communication and confidence over time. Pupils with physical and sensory needs gain skills that help them take part more independently, such as using switches or operating adapted tools. Adults celebrate these moments so pupils feel proud of what they can do. Those following a more formal curriculum learn how to read, write and communicate more effectively. All pupils are provided with the opportunity to study accreditations appropriate to them, which for some extend beyond entry-level qualifications.

Older pupils develop practical skills linked to everyday life, including choosing items in a shop, preparing food or taking part in community activities. When teaching is adapted well, pupils make secure progress. Where this is not the case, pupils make slower progress.

Leaders make checks on pupils' achievement. They review pupils' work and support staff to identify improvements. Most pupils feel prepared for their next stage of education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Most pupils attend regularly, even though many have complex medical needs that can affect their attendance. Leaders track absence closely and work with families to remove barriers. Some pupils receive home learning tasks during long absences to help them stay connected with school and feel ready to return. Leaders analyse behaviour and attendance information to identify patterns and adjust support. Parents agree that pupils feel safe and cared for. Leaders understand that negative behaviour often reflects an unmet need, and they use training to help staff respond appropriately. Staff respond quickly to any emerging concerns to ensure a respectful and positive environment for all pupils.

Relationships between pupils are positive. Pupils respond well to praise and small rewards. Parents and carers value being invited to celebration events where pupils are recognised for reaching important milestones. For pupils, such milestones include learning to share, take turns and join in with group activities. When pupils struggle emotionally, adults guide them patiently using calm voices. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and try hard to take part in activities. Leaders ensure that bullying or unkind behaviour is not tolerated and is dealt with quickly. Staff understand the school's behaviour approaches and adapt them appropriately to meet pupils' needs.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum now meets the wide-ranging needs of pupils. Leaders have adapted it so it remains broad, balanced and ambitious for all pupils. Staff use different learning routes to decide what each pupil should learn next. For some, this involves early engagement activities, while for others it means mastering basic functional skills. In most classes, staff explain ideas clearly and break learning into manageable parts so pupils understand what to do. However, not all staff check how well pupils understand their learning, and sometimes learning moves on before pupils' understanding is secure.

Reading and communication are priorities. Staff use stories, songs and practical resources to build vocabulary and early reading skills. Some pupils begin to recognise symbols or letters, while others respond to sensory cues or simple patterns. Most staff support pupils to use their communication aids well when responding to instructions.

Lessons usually include activities that match pupils' needs well. Staff use sensory items, objects of reference and practical tasks to help pupils stay focused. For pupils working at more formal levels, reading, writing and mathematics link to everyday tasks such as shopping or cooking.

Leaders continue to provide training so staff develop the subject knowledge they need. They understand which aspects of the curriculum require further development and are supporting staff to deliver it as designed.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Staff identify pupils' needs well. They gather information from parents, carers and professionals and use it to design routines, care and learning. All pupils receive highly personalised support. This may be through using approaches such as visual timetables, calming breaks and bespoke communication aids. These strategies are typically used well across the school.

Parents value being involved in their children's education. They appreciate the contact with staff and feel comfortable sharing updates about their child's needs. Staff use these conversations to adjust support when circumstances change. Leaders also maintain positive links with health and care professionals and act on recommendations in a timely way.

Additional funding is used wisely on specialist seating, communication aids and adapted equipment that helps pupils take part comfortably. Pupils who are known to children's social care receive effective support so they can join in the same opportunities as their peers. Staff work closely with the virtual school to make sure this happens.

Staff training is practical. Many adults are now more confident using communication approaches because they understand the importance of all pupils having a voice. Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and review whether support strategies are helping pupils learn and take part successfully. As a result, pupils feel included, cared for and understood.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders act with integrity, commitment and kindness. They have an accurate understanding of The Meadows' strengths and the areas that need further improvement. They have prioritised the right actions to strengthen teaching and learning and are continuing to work towards greater consistency across classes. Staff understand the school's priorities and feel supported to implement them. These developments are making a meaningful difference to the quality of education and to pupils' day-to-day experiences.

Staff feel well supported and know that leaders value their wellbeing. Leaders have introduced a more coherent professional learning programme, which is helping staff develop the expertise needed to deliver the curriculum as intended. Leaders recognise that further

work is required to ensure practice is consistent in every class and that professional development continues to build capacity.

Governors understand the school's priorities and meet their statutory duties. They provide appropriate challenge and support, particularly in relation to safeguarding, attendance and curriculum development. Their backing for leaders' decision to overhaul the curriculum has been instrumental in designing a programme that better meets pupils' needs. Governors know the importance of developing additional layers of leadership so that responsibilities are shared and monitoring is more effective.

Leaders value the contributions of therapists, health services and the local authority. They welcome external scrutiny and draw on partnerships with other schools to refine their practice. Parents and carers appreciate the care their children receive. Leaders continue to strengthen this partnership so that families understand their children's potential and ambitions. They have created an inclusive school where pupils feel safe, valued and happy.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils' personal development has been a significant focus for leaders. Staff help pupils learn to communicate their needs, make choices and build independence. All pupils have personal support plans that outline how they will develop communication skills and independence. Their achievements are tracked meaningfully against the school's values of communication, respect, independence, collaboration and growth. Pupils feel proud when they receive rewards linked to these values. They also learn how to work with others, show respect and take part in activities that support their social and cultural development.

Pupils enjoy a range of activities that broaden their understanding of the world. These include visits to places of worship, travel training and opportunities to explore nature outdoors. Activities are adapted so all pupils, including those with complex medical needs, can take part safely. Many pupils benefit from therapeutic sessions that help them manage their emotions. They enjoy spending time in the refurbished sensory spaces, which help them feel calm.

Careers education begins in Year 7. Pupils learn about different roles in the community and practise work-related skills. As pupils grow older, preparation for life after school becomes more focused. Staff help pupils think about future options, such as college, supported living or volunteering. Pupils enjoy practical tasks, such as gardening or contributing to enterprise projects. Disadvantaged pupils receive support so they can access the same opportunities.

Pupils' wellbeing is a key priority. Staff talk with pupils about feelings using clear language and visual resources. They teach pupils how to manage risk and stay safe online. They also teach pupils about healthy friendships and how to recognise unsafe behaviour. Staff act quickly to address any concerns. Assemblies and lessons develop pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and how they link to their own school values.

Pupils' views are valued. They share ideas that help improve their school, and staff respond to their suggestions.

Post-16 students follow programmes that are designed around their individual needs, starting points and long-term goals. Leaders understand the strengths and priority areas of the provision and use this to adapt study programmes so that students build the knowledge, skills and confidence they need for adult life. Staff design learning that links closely to students' education, health and care plan outcomes and their aspirations for the future.

Students develop important independence skills, including travel training, communication, personal organisation and practical home-management tasks. Leaders ensure that the qualifications students work towards are appropriate and achievable. Most students make steady academic progress. All students strengthen their confidence, social communication and independence because routines are clear and expectations are consistent.

Staff use well-structured tasks and visual strategies to introduce new ideas. They break learning into manageable steps and check progress. Personal targets support students to apply what they learn in different contexts.

Students benefit from meaningful work-related learning on site and, when appropriate, in the community. These experiences prepare them to follow instructions, interact safely and contribute positively to the local area. Careers guidance and future destinations planning meets the needs of the students. As a result of effective transition preparations, students move on to suitable placements, including further education, supported internships and assisted living.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils begin their day at The Meadows in a calm and supportive environment. Staff welcome pupils in ways that are appropriate to their needs, whether through a simple gesture or kind encouragement. Pupils move into early morning routines when they feel ready. They are supported by adults who understand what helps them settle and feel ready for the day. This steady start helps many pupils cope with the move from home to school, which some pupils find difficult to manage.

The importance of effective communication is understood by all staff. They use pictures, objects and signing to help pupils share choices and ideas. Some pupils are beginning to try new ways to communicate, while others rely on familiar systems. Staff give pupils time to respond and encourage them to become more independent over time.

Pupils enjoy taking part in activities that reflect their interests. Younger pupils develop early reading, communication and physical skills. As they grow older, pupils take part in practical activities and community visits that help them understand the world around them. Some pupils learn to choose healthy snacks or help organise small group routines. Others are developing the skills to concentrate for longer periods with shorter breaks that help them manage their emotions.

Pupils build positive relationships with adults and each other. They enjoy outdoor learning, creative subjects and experiences that help them grow in confidence. They learn to take

turns, play alongside each other and practise their social skills. When pupils find social situations tricky, staff quickly support them to work out what to do next.

Pupils know adults will listen if they feel worried. Bullying is uncommon because when disagreements happen, adults help pupils repair friendships. Pupils learn about staying safe online and offline through simple, repeated messages.

Pupils are proud of their achievements and talk about their hopes for the future with growing confidence.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue strengthening the quality of teaching so all staff understand and apply agreed approaches consistently.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff accurately identify gaps in learning when they occur and make appropriate adaptations to enable pupils to learn the curriculum as intended.
 - Leaders should continue to develop leadership at all levels to support improvement and enable leaders to monitor actions effectively.
 - Leaders should further strengthen partnerships with parents and carers so families are more confident in supporting their children's education and future ambitions.
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About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Information about this school:

This is a special school that provides education for pupils aged between 11 and 19. The school caters for pupils with profound, severe and moderate learning difficulties, including those with complex medical needs and physical disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school offers a post-16 provision under the same registration to support students' transition to adulthood.

This school operates over two sites: one at this registered address and the other a satellite centre for post-16 students at Connor Education Centre. An additional 49 students attend this setting, which when combined with the main school site, means there are 263 pupils attending the school.

There has been a new headteacher appointed since the last inspection.

This school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and a range of middle leaders during the inspection.

Inspectors met with the chair of governors and four other members of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with the local authority school improvement adviser and the interim head of the virtual school for Sandwell.

Inspectors considered evidence from a range of sources, including lesson visits, meetings with teachers, work scrutiny and discussions with groups of pupils.

Inspectors also considered responses from surveys sent to pupils, parents and staff.

Headteacher: James Horspool

Lead inspector:

Antony Bradshaw, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Pamela Matty, Ofsted Inspector

Pete Hines OBE, Ofsted Inspector

Ellen Taylor, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

223

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

School capacity

215

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

54.73%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

100.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

SEN unit

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, VI - Visual Impairment, OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability, HI - Hearing Impairment, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health, MSI - Multi-Sensory Impairment, PD - Physical Disability, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty, SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty, PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty,

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school
2023 leavers (provisional)	100%
2022 leavers (revised)	95%
2021 leavers (revised)	100%

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school
2024/25 (2 term)	13.8%
2023/24 (3 term)	12.1%

Year	This school
2022/23 (3 term)	10.3%

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school
2024/25 (2 term)	38.0%
2023/24 (3 term)	27.9%
2022/23 (3 term)	29.2%

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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