

Brownhill School

Heights Lane, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL12 0PZ

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and senior leaders, supported by a strong governing body, have calmly led and managed great changes in regard to building work and staffing structure over the past two years. They now have a clear vision for the school which is shared by all staff.
- The good quality teaching, care and support, helps most pupils settle into the school well and make good progress in their reading, understanding of what they read, spelling and mathematics.
- The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities within and outside the school. These encourage individual pupils to develop good attitudes and behaviour in lessons, so that they achieve well in their course work and examinations.
- The vast majority of pupils who leave the school advance into further education, employment or training.
- While pupils can be challenging in their behaviour at times, they are calmly and consistently well supported by all staff so that behaviour in lessons is nearly always good.
- Staff morale is high. They work very well together and want the school to succeed. Teaching and support and the school's overall performance continue to improve.
- The headteacher and staff work exceptionally hard to gain parents' trust and confidence. This is beginning to have a very positive effect towards the development of a strong partnership to support pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance.
- The governors are knowledgeable about the school's work and are actively involved in planning for school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is sometimes provided by teachers who are not fully confident in their knowledge or understanding of the subject being taught. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they might.
- In a few cases, teaching for pupils who are assessed as being on the autistic spectrum is not always planned or taught in ways that lead to learning and progress for these pupils.
- The care, guidance and support for pupils on the autistic spectrum are not always consistently provided.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a total of 12 full or part lessons at the three school sites. One lesson was jointly observed with the headteacher. Ten teachers were observed across the school age-range.
- Inspectors listened to a small group of primary-aged pupils read, and talked with pupils about their work in class.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, members of the governing body, and a member of staff who checks on pupils' attendance.
- A meeting was held with the school's local authority representative.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS).
- Two separate meetings were held with small groups of primary- and secondary-aged pupils.
- Inspectors considered 55 staff questionnaire returns.
- Insufficient responses were available on the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) to be able to access them. The views of four parents and grandparents who visited the school were taken into account.
- The inspectors looked at school documents and policies on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Pupils' books, individual education and behaviour plans and records of their progress were considered along with subject policies and teachers' planning.

Inspection team

John Ashley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Brownhill School provides for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social needs. Recently, it has also been providing for pupils who have been assessed as being on the autistic spectrum. A number of pupils have other needs, such as difficulties in concentration or in their reading.
- The school is part of the Brownhill Learning Community which occupies three sites. The school is part of a 'loose federation' with the local authority's pupil referral service.
- There has been a great deal of building work on each site over the past two years while the school has continued to operate.
- All pupils on the school register have a statement of special educational needs and could be located at any of the sites depending on their needs. Other pupils who are within the Brownhill Learning Community were not considered within this inspection.
- The vast majority of pupils are boys of White British heritage. Almost all of the school's pupils are eligible for the pupil premium and this is significantly higher than national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Some students benefit from studying at off-site placements that include: Kickstart Middleton, Hopwood Hall College and Fairbridge.
- There are three newly qualified teachers at the school. Their training providers were: Huddersfield University, Edgehill University and Manchester Metropolitan University.
- An agreed new staffing structure has just been introduced at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a greater proportion of teaching is good or better, and improve the learning, attitudes, behaviour and progress of some pupils in some subjects, including those on the autistic spectrum, by:
 - providing training opportunities for staff who are teaching a non-specialist subject so that they gain greater knowledge and understanding about the planning of activities, how lessons are taught and marking of pupils' work
 - providing training opportunities for all staff who teach or support pupils on the autistic spectrum, in partnership with other support agencies and the local authority
 - checking the positive impact of training on the quality of teaching, support and learning in agreed subjects, including the benefits for pupils on the autistic spectrum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From low starting points, most pupils make good progress and achieve well despite disruptions in their education or periods of absence.
- Most pupils respond very well to the teaching and support provided which are planned to meet individual needs. Occasionally, where not enough account has been taken of pupils' reading abilities, or their understanding of certain concepts, or where staff are not fully aware of how pupils on the autistic spectrum best learn, progress in learning can be limited.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to achieve nationally accredited courses from Year 8 onwards. By the time they leave at the end of Key Stage 4, the great majority achieve at least one GCSE, occasionally achieving five GCSEs, which is at the nationally expected level. Most pupils then go on to further education, training or employment.
- All pupils benefit from learning in different contexts, for example, when they are encouraged to work in teams to design and make a toy for a toddler from a cardboard box. Recently, a group of Year 11 girls benefitted in terms of their confidence and social development from a visit to a beauty parlour, hairdresser and restaurant, which they later recorded, as part of a project in a colourful brochure.
- Pupils read regularly and are able to use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read new words such as 'vulnerable' in the course of their classwork. Younger pupils are slowly developing their skills and enjoyment of reading, for example, when discussing a Manchester United magazine.
- Some pupils who find it difficult to attend a whole lesson are sensitively supervised by caring staff and gently brought back into the lesson to complete their work. Older pupils in the Year 11 centre respond very well to the green slip system which allows them to have some time-out because they have completed their classwork successfully. Some pupils check their own work against the course requirements before they accept a green slip.
- Each pupil is valued so there is equality of opportunity to access learning or nationally accredited courses, including for those pupils who receive home tuition. As a result, the large number of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make similar progress and attain similar standards to other pupils. There are no significant gaps between the performance of these and other pupils. The small number of girls are fully included in school life, for example, when taking part in and achieving well in school sport or design technology lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers generally use well the information gained from checks made on the pupils' arrival, about individuals' ability in reading, understanding, spelling, mathematics and behaviour to set targets and group them according to their particular needs. On occasion, teachers' planning does not take full account of the needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum, which can then lead to a lack of involvement and interest in the lesson by these pupils.
- Where teaching is good or better, the teacher has a sound grasp of the subject, good questioning and use of resources which lead to pupils wanting to join in and show an interest. For example, in a lesson about the First World War, the teacher made good use of information and communication technology to show images of trench warfare. Using this resource, his explanation of what students on the autistic spectrum were going to learn, and in what order, enabled them to talk with great knowledge and understanding about daily life in the trenches.
- In Year 9 mathematics lessons, the checking of work includes pupils' views about their work. For example, one realised that he 'forgot the zero when multiplying 53 by 33' and, as a result, this informed his next steps in learning.
- In a Year 5 English lesson, the teacher's planning took full account of all pupils' needs so that they all made progress by learning new adjectives. More-able pupils worked on their written

presentation while less-able pupils received support in their spelling and vocabulary. These approaches fostered good attitudes, independent learning and good behaviour.

- Where teaching is not as effective, teachers do not have the required knowledge about the subject because it is not their specialist area. As a result, pupils do not progress as well because the reading requirements are too difficult or teachers' explanations are unclear.
- Teachers deploy support staff to good effect in support of pupils' learning. In a Year 5 physical education lesson, where football skills were being taught, the support assistant demonstrated dribbling skills to the pupils which motivated them to practise and perfect these skills.
- Teachers regularly mark pupils' work. Course work is well monitored and checked so that pupils can see the progress they are making and the next steps in their learning. Sometimes, when staff are not teaching their specialist subject, marking is not as clear as it should be.
- The school deploys teachers and support staff well to meet a variety of needs, including those with additional mental health needs who might find attending school difficult. As a result, home tuition and alternative placements are used appropriately to involve pupils in learning, who previously were not attending their mainstream school. Sometimes, this leads to them gaining nationally recognised qualifications.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and in other areas of the school is generally good. Arrivals, break-times, lunchtimes and departures at the end of the day are mostly calm. Any misbehaviour is dealt with quickly.
- Occasionally, where there is a mix of pupils whose main needs relate to their behaviour with those who are on the autistic spectrum, there can be challenging incidents that need to be managed. Generally, staff do this well but, occasionally, different interventions are needed to calm pupils who may have become upset.
- Members of the staff team are very supportive of each other. This helps them to provide a secure and safe environment which is recognised by the pupils, who say that they feel looked after well. The school's on-line system of rewards is popular with pupils because it motivates them to attend and behave well in school.
- Parents say that the school works very hard to improve their children's attendance so that they then complete course-work and examinations to go to the next stage of their education or into employment or training. Twenty four of the 46 pupils who have attendance difficulties have made significant progress, although attendance overall is still below the national average. One pupil stated that, 'When I was at my last school, I had less than 10% school attendance. Since starting at Brownhill, my attendance has gone up to 99%!'
- The school records behavioural incidents in detail and staff make sure that pupils and parents are fully involved in checking that individual behaviour plans lead to improvements. As a result, there has been a gradual reduction in fixed-term exclusions over the past year and behaviour in lessons is mostly good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because they are encouraged to raise funds for charities or a trip to Africa for their peers. They also respond with great enthusiasm to taking part in sailing trips from Anglesey to Scotland with the school's youth worker, and return with greater confidence and with a sense of responsibility towards the needs of others.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior staff and the governing body inspire others towards a shared vision and sense of purpose. Calm, focused leadership has guided the school through immense changes over the past two years. Consequently, pupils are well cared for, with most making good progress in their learning and behaviour.

- Teaching and support continue to improve. Subject leaders are now involved in observing lessons, giving feedback to other staff and increasing the proportion of lessons that are good or better. Strong links are made to the Teachers' Standards so that teachers know what they need to work on as part of their professional development. However, not all teachers are suitably trained in all the subjects they teach or in the teaching and support for pupils on the autistic spectrum.
- The school's self-review systems are rigorous because the headteacher, senior leaders and governing body work together to decide upon key areas to improve the school. The local authority judgements about the school match those of senior leaders and the governing body. There are positive links through sharing of good practice with other neighbouring schools.
- The curriculum provides a range of exciting opportunities for pupils, including their outstanding creative and imaginative poetry contributions to a published book called, 'Poetry Games.' Geography lessons have led to pupils researching life in different countries such as Brazil and Africa, leading to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Policies ensure that reading, writing and communication are taught in different subjects.
- The school works tirelessly to engage with parents to improve attendance. The use of pupil premium funding to provide additional staff support to increase pupils' attendance is having a positive impact.
- Parents praise the school and the approachability of the headteacher and her staff. Regular newsletters and coffee mornings have contributed to this view.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors meet regularly and have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's work. They have been fully involved in setting out the agenda for school improvement. Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and other senior staff and ask challenging questions about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The governing body makes good use of the school's finances, for example, when overseeing recent building developments or using the pupil premium and the new primary school sport funding. They have received appropriate training in safeguarding, recruitment and financial management and have recently completed a review of governance. The governing body makes sure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils according to statutory requirements are in place.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105861
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	426051

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Jones
Headteacher	Kate Connolly
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2010
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