

Brownhill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105861
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	355856
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

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	Mr Peter Lord
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Connolly
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2007
School address	Heights Lane Rochdale Lancashire OL12 0PZ
Telephone number	01706 648990
Fax number	01706 648537
Email address	kconnolly@brownhill.rochdale.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 lessons taught by nine teachers and trainers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, teaching staff, and an educational welfare officer. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at teachers' planning for lessons, school leaders' development plans and samples of children's work. They also took into account the views of the seven parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress pupils make in mathematics, English and science.
- How well the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all learners.
- The progress made by different groups of pupils.
- How well governors support the school.

Information about the school

The school serves the whole of the Rochdale authority and is based on three sites. It provides for the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Some pupils have additional needs including moderate learning difficulties. Only three girls are on roll currently. Most pupils are of secondary age. A higher than average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A very large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The local authority has recently amalgamated the school with the pupil referral service to form the Brownhill Learning Community.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Brownhill is a good school which provides a good level of care, guidance and support for all its pupils. This, coupled with the success with which their complex social and emotional needs are met, enables them to make good progress both personally and academically. Parents and carers appreciate the work of school staff in supporting their children. One commented, 'My child is making progress at last because he is at a school that understands him.'

The headteacher and senior leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure the quality of provision necessary for them to do so. Self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and rigorous, and findings are acted upon to good effect. The school's strength is its ability to recognise and support the needs of all pupils. This ensures barriers to learning are minimised. Since the last inspection the school has significantly improved many aspects of its performance such as ensuring pupils' progress is effectively tracked and monitored, and improving the healthy outcomes achieved by its pupils. This demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils grow in confidence as they move through school. Many say they enjoy school and are clear about how to stay healthy. Behaviour is good both within and outside the classroom. Pupils say they feel safe. Attendance is rising and has improved significantly since the last inspection. However, the school is aware that more work is needed to make sure this upward trend continues. Strong links with outside agencies have been developed which support pupils' learning and development significantly. This, coupled with a well developed work experience programme, helps to ensure pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education or training. Pupils have an understanding of the local community; however, links to promote their awareness of life in a multi-ethnic society are limited.

Teaching is good in the majority of classrooms and is based on a clear assessment of pupils' learning needs. However, teachers' marking of pupils' books is insufficiently rigorous in some subject areas and, as a result, pupils are not always given sufficiently clear guidance as to how to improve their work. An assessment system is now in place. This ensures that monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress towards their targets is effective in all subjects. The curriculum is personalised to meet the needs of individual learners well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure subject coordinators develop more robust marking schemes that clearly inform pupils of the further steps needed to improve their work.

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- Continue to work closely with outside agencies including the education welfare service in order to improve further pupil attendance.
- Provide further opportunities for pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society by developing links with communities or groups from backgrounds that differ from their own.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When pupils join the school the levels at which they are working are typically much lower than those expected for their age. Pupils also often need to develop the skills needed for good learning, for example, sitting down and listening during lessons. Although attainment remains low at the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress in their work. When added to the successful development of necessary learning skills, this represents good achievement. They respond positively to their individual learning programmes. These enable pupils to work consistently and achieve well across the curriculum. This was well demonstrated in a Key Stage 3 science lesson where pupils enthusiastically investigated the different colours in a selection of inks using chromatography techniques. Several pupils, working together, took the investigation a stage further and started to look at other sources of ink. They used good investigation strategies and, as a result, learnt more than the expected outcome for the lesson. The pupil-led teamwork was impressive taking into account the social and emotional needs of these pupils. Overall pupils across all key stages are making good progress, including in English, mathematics and science. Pupils leave with as many qualifications and accreditations as possible. Last year's school leavers successfully passed examinations in art, English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, and physical education. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are looked after by the local authority, make equally good progress.

Pupils feel safe because they know staff are supportive and help them at all times. Most clearly enjoy school. As one pupil commented: 'It's good here because people know how I feel.' Pupils recognise the importance of eating healthy meals and have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. Many pupils enjoy the wide-ranging sporting opportunities offered and appreciate the part this plays in a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make a contribution to the community in and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others. For example, pupils are frequently involved in fund-raising activities and have recently taken on a commitment to raise funds for a village in Uganda. Pupils' satisfactory overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the way in which they react to each other and take care of the environment. However, they do not yet have a sufficiently good awareness of communities beyond those represented in the immediate locality.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use assessment information effectively to set achievable targets for pupils. Planning of lessons is conscientious. In the majority of lessons good attention is given to ensuring work is modified to meet the different needs of pupils within the class. As a result pupils engage quickly and are often eager to learn. Although teachers regularly mark work, pupils are given too little direction from comments made and, as a result, do not always know how to improve their work. This reduces the effectiveness of learning for some pupils and slows progress. In most lessons support staff are well deployed and work closely and effectively with teachers to support the needs of all learners. Behaviour is good in lessons. This is due to teacher's high expectations and good strategies for managing pupils' behaviour, together with strong relationships which ensure pupils re-engage with learning.

The curriculum is well organised and imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. Residential visits to a variety of locations help develop pupils' independence. For example, a recent four-day sailing trip with the Ocean Youth Sailing Trust allowed pupils to put into practice sailing skills learnt through school. This was described by one pupil as, 'The most exciting thing I have ever done.' The range of academic accreditation offered to pupils is good, as are the quality of work experience and

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college placements. Whilst English, mathematics and science are generally taught to a good standard the role that curriculum coordinators play in planning, organizing and leading their subject areas needs to be developed further.

As a result of good care, guidance and support, pupils feel there is always someone who will listen and help. A careful and thorough assessment is undertaken when pupils arrive at the school, which is then used to target support effectively. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and this is helped by strong links with many outside agencies. Attendance has been low in the past. It is currently rising rapidly as a result of strong links with the education welfare service. However, school leaders recognise that there is further work to be done to sustain and build on this to ensure continued improvement. Transition arrangements are securely in place and are well supported by partnerships with 'Connexions' advisors.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The visionary leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders is moving the school forward well and ensuring good outcomes for pupils. This, coupled with strong partnerships forged with outside agencies, is driving improvement further. The structure of the governing body has undergone recent change with the appointment of a new chair who is focusing on making governors more accountable. However, currently, the governing body offers a satisfactory level of support to the school and challenge to senior leaders. Policies and procedures ensure all government safeguarding requirements are met and that practice is of a good standard. The strength and quality of these procedures mean that safeguarding issues are dealt with effectively by senior leaders. Leaders and managers have ensured that the school is an inclusive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within school are good. The school works hard and successfully to eliminate any gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils. Leaders are beginning to build successful links, which benefit pupils and the local community. Some links with the global community have been established and, as a result, pupils are involved in supporting a Ugandan village. However, there are too few links to other communities to improve and develop pupils' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society. The school makes much effort to engage all parents and carers. The work of school staff ensures they are kept well informed about their child's successes. Parent education programmes and attendance diary links with home are in place and, as a result, parents appreciate the ongoing work of the school.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Seven responses were received by the inspection team from parents and carers. This represented just over 10% of the school population and was a low response rate. The majority of questionnaires were wholly positive and supported the work of the school. These matched the views of the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brownhill School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 7 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 56 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	14	5	71	1	14	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	29	4	57	1	14	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	29	5	71	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	43	3	43	1	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	29	4	57	1	14	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	29	4	57	1	14	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	43	3	43	1	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	29	4	57	1	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	57	2	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	29	4	57	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	43	3	43	1	14	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brownhill School, Rochdale OL12 0PZ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. It was lovely to meet you all and to hear how you enjoy coming to school. We were amazed by the number of different fish you were preparing in your catering lesson and we hope the conger eel tasted good. We send a special 'thank you' to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us, particularly the school council. We agree with those of you that told us that you think your school is good. These are the things we judged to be good.

- Your good behaviour and the friendly and polite welcome you all give to visitors.
- The way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices.
- The way in which you work hard and achieve a good range of qualifications.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- ensure that they give you clear directions on how to improve your work when they mark your books
- make sure all of you attend as often as you can
- give you more opportunities to experience other cultures to help you to get a better understanding of how other people live their lives.

Thank you once again for making us so welcome and letting us join in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marian Thomas

Lead inspector

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