

Spring Brook School

Dean Street, Failsworth, Oldham, Greater Manchester

Inspection dates

2–3 December 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do not make sufficient progress and do not achieve well enough in external examinations.
- Pupils' skills in English and mathematics are not practised enough in all subjects to enable more of them to gain higher grades at GCSE.
- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers do not always make it clear what they expect each pupil to achieve in a lesson or give them time to respond to suggestions for improvement in the marking of their work.
- Pupils do not always feel safe when the behaviour of pupils admitted at late stages to the school causes them concern.
- The most able pupils, in particular, are capable of doing more in some lessons. Expectations are not high enough and pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work to build more quickly on what they already know and can do.
- The curriculum for older pupils does not engage all of them to want to learn so that behaviour deteriorates in some lessons and pupils do not respond well. School-based pupils have too little opportunity to practise work-related learning skills.
- The attendance rates of a minority of pupils are too low so that pupils make slow progress towards their targets.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in the upper school. They have laid firm foundations for the new provision to ensure there is good capacity to drive the school forward in all areas of its development.
- The quality of teaching in the lower school at Key Stages 1 and 2 is consistently at least good and sometimes it is outstanding.
- The majority of pupils in the lower school make or exceed the progress expected of them especially in reading and writing. Rates of progress in mathematics have improved recently and are now catching up.
- Pupils on both sites are very well cared for and supported. Relationships are strong and pupils know they can discuss concerns with a trusted adult.
- Training for staff has improved the management of behaviour so that incidents requiring physical intervention are now rare.
- Governors know the school well because those who are able to do so make frequent visits. They make an effective contribution to identifying strengths and weaknesses and provide support and challenge to the headteacher to make the necessary changes for school improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 11 lessons, taught by 11 different teachers. During visits to classrooms inspectors also examined pupils’ work in their books and files and, where appropriate, had informal discussions with pupils about what they were learning. Three of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and head of lower school.
- Meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team, teachers with posts of responsibility, with the seconded lead from the partner school, two officers from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke to groups of pupils in both upper and lower school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour incident reports, attendance, pupil progress, performance management of staff, school self-evaluation and improvement planning, and teachers’ lesson planning.
- The inspectors analysed the responses from the 30 staff questionnaires returned. There were insufficient responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire to be able to view them but the lead inspector held a telephone conversation with one parent.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alastair Younger

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs relating to their social, emotional and behavioural needs. Pupils are drawn from across the local authority. Some pupils have additional learning difficulties, particularly relating to difficulties with literacy. Many of the pupils have been excluded from previous settings before joining the school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is about half the national average and none is reported to speak English as an additional language.
- More than three quarters of pupils are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium which is much higher than the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and for those who are looked after by the local authority. The number of pupils who are looked after is high.
- At the time of its previous inspection, Spring Brook School provided for primary-aged pupils only but in September 2013 it extended its age range to provide for pupils up to the age of 16. The first pupils in the Key Stage 3 and 4 provision transferred to the school from a pupil referral unit. The school now operates with upper and lower school departments on two sites, some 2.6 miles apart. The lower school is co-located with a mainstream primary school.
- The school makes use of a number of alternative off-site education providers, including Oldham College, Kick Start, Well-Being Service and Raise the Youth.
- The current headteacher took up her post in May 2013.
- At the time of the inspection and at the request of the headteacher, a lead teacher from a partner special school had been seconded to Spring Brook for a term to provide support to leaders and managers in their planning for school improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4, to increase pupils' rates of progress and raise attainment by the time they leave school by:
 - using previous assessments of what pupils can already do in order to plan challenging work which will move their learning on more quickly, especially for the most able
 - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and sharing these with them
 - ensuring teachers explain clearly what they expect each pupil to learn and what work they expect each of them to complete in a lesson
 - ensuring English and mathematics skills are practised in all subjects
 - giving pupils time to respond to 'next steps' and corrections in the marking of their work
 - ensuring pupils have access to courses which will prepare them well for their future lives.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:
 - completing and implementing the review of the curriculum to ensure it matches the needs, interests and abilities of all pupils, especially those at Key Stages 3 and 4, so that they improve their attendance and are engaged in lessons
 - continuing to develop staff skills in managing behaviour in order to improve pupils' behavioural responses and further reduce exclusions.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has worked extremely hard to pull together the two very different elements of the school, to improve standards and raise expectations, particularly of the staff and pupils who were formerly in the pupil referral unit. Her meticulous planning and the training for staff to improve the quality of teaching and pupil achievement and to reduce unacceptable behaviour are beginning to show results.
- The headteacher has not been afraid to draw on support from partner schools and has worked with the local authority to secure improvement. The local authority continues to keep a check on the school's progress and offer support.
- Senior and middle leaders now work as a cohesive team with a shared vision and ambition for the future of the school and this vision is shared very well with all staff across both sites. With the support of governors, leaders have demonstrated a good capacity to ensure recent improvements are sustained and built on to result in better outcomes for pupils. Improvements have been too recent to have resulted in greater success in external examinations last summer.
- Senior and middle leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching, including checks on pupils' work in their books and files. Arrangements to manage the performance of staff were already well in place at the lower school and have now been completed for the upper school staff in the last year. All teachers are providing project plans to improve their subjects or areas of teaching and all have clear targets to improve pupil achievement.
- All school staff are committed to ensuring pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed, with some pupils being provided with home tuition when they are unable or unwilling to come to school.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum and staff work hard to help pupils understand and practise British values.
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs of pupils in the lower school to ensure they make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics and to enjoy a broad range of other subjects. Middle leaders have challenged teachers to promote literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4. The curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils is under review to broaden the range of accreditation opportunities and to better match the needs and interests of the pupils but has yet to be agreed and put in place.
- The data on pupil progress are now extremely detailed and quickly identify pupils who may be falling behind so that action can be taken to help them catch up. Careful analysis also ensures that pupil premium is being used effectively to ensure there are no gaps and no groups of pupils are achieving less well than others. Careful checks are made on the progress, attendance and behaviour of pupils attending alternative provision.
- Regular training has improved staff's management of behaviour. Lead staff for behaviour recognise that strategies are still not always used consistently and further training is planned. Nevertheless, analysis shows that physical intervention is now only used on rare occasions to ensure pupil and staff safety and the use of exclusions has also reduced significantly this term.
- The school's leaders enjoy excellent partnerships with other schools, sharing expertise and best practice. Although improvements in many aspects of the school's work, especially in the upper school, are still at an early stage, the school's checks and planning have clearly identified priorities designed to drive the school forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide very effective support to the headteacher and hold her and her senior leaders to account for pupils' progress and achievement. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and of the behaviour and safety of pupils through frequent visits to the school. They check the work of the headteacher and staff to ensure any decisions about pay increases are linked to performance.
 - The governing body ensures safeguarding checks when recruiting staff are carried out rigorously and have appointed an attendance officer to reduce absences. They make sure that the pupil premium and primary sports funding are spent appropriately and making a positive difference. Additional money through the primary sports fund has been used extremely well to provide pupils with access to sports they may not otherwise have tried such as basketball, lacrosse and tag rugby; pupils at Key Stage 2 have enjoyed swimming lessons through the fund and are now entering competitions. Staff have learned new skills demonstrated by a sports coach and pupils are now benefiting from these.
 - At present the governing body is working with the headteacher and local authority on plans to manage significant budget cuts and to restructure the management team.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. When pupils enjoy the subject they engage well, work hard and make good progress. However, in too many lessons, a few of the older pupils seem bored and disinterested so that behaviour for learning breaks down and they achieve little.
- At Key Stages 1 and 2, behavioural incidents are often the result of relationship problems or because pupils have low self-esteem about their work. Pupils are managed very well so that there is little disruption to the learning of others and they are always encouraged to return to the classroom as quickly as possible. Incidents reduce over time because pupils' needs are being met well and they are being helped to succeed in their work by careful planning.
- Pupils at Key Stage 3 and particularly at Key Stage 4 sometimes leave the lesson simply because they do not want to work or find the curriculum is not engaging. A significant minority of these older pupils have a legacy of poor attitudes to learning which staff are finding difficult to overcome. These pupils are not developing the skills of resilience they will need in their future lives. Although their behaviour rarely disrupts lessons, the quality and quantity of work achieved by such pupils in some lessons is very low. Senior staff are concerned that their attitudes can influence other, younger pupils and are working hard to overcome this. Year 7 pupils who have transferred from lower school have far more positive attitudes to their learning and these improved attitudes are beginning to filter through the upper school.
- Pupils are very aware of the reward and sanction system which has been put in place and which is largely effective. The majority of pupils do not wish to lose their Friday afternoon option time and will ensure they complete work, but a small minority seem unconcerned by this measure.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. This is largely because the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of pupils leads others to feel unsafe on occasions. This small minority are usually pupils who have arrived at the school at a very late stage, often after periods out of education. Sometimes it is decided that these pupils should be educated from home or arrangements to educate them in alternative off-site provision can prove successful.
- The use of physical interventions and fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly this term as a result of intensive staff training around positive behaviour management which means that early strategies are used far more effectively. Further training is planned to ensure consistency and to reduce them down still further but physical intervention is now only used to ensure the safety of the pupils or staff on rare occasions.
- Recording of behavioural incidents is rigorous and is now well analysed so that appropriate action can be taken and incidents reduced over time. The school has very good relationships with pupils' families and with other agencies that help to provide the pupils and their families with support.
- The school has ensured that pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and they are particularly knowledgeable about racist-, homophobic- and cyber-bullying. Pupils have a good knowledge about how to stay safe on the internet.
- Poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4 has a negative effect on the amount of learning that takes place. The school offers alternative educational off-site placements to these pupils where appropriate. An attendance officer has been employed by the school to work with pupils and families to raise attendance rates.
- Risk assessments are carried out for placements in alternative provision and work experience to ensure they are appropriate for the individual. Placements are monitored rigorously to ensure pupils attend and are safe.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching at the lower school in Key Stages 1 and 2 is generally good and sometimes outstanding but in the upper school at Key Stages 3 and 4 there is still some teaching which requires improvement.
- Since the previous inspection the teaching of writing has improved significantly following professional development training so that pupils are now making much better progress towards their targets from their different starting points. Most teachers in all subjects are ensuring pupils are given opportunities to write rather than simply providing them with worksheets or copied information from books or the internet, but this still requires further development. Teachers do not create sufficient opportunities to promote

mathematical skills in other subjects.

- Action has been taken to improve the sharing of assessments and information about what pupils already know and can do to plan lessons which build on pupils' learning more quickly. This can be seen by the far more rapid progress being made by current Year 7 pupils after they transferred to the upper school than had occurred in the previous year.
- Where teachers use their good understanding of the learning needs, interests and abilities of their pupils effectively, planning is well matched and lessons are stimulating to ensure that each pupil achieves well. In an English lesson Year 11 students were given a topic about music and through activities which matched their differing abilities and through excellent questioning by the teacher, they were able to identify language which they could use to improve their own writing in examinations. However, in occasional lessons it is not made clear enough to individual pupils what they are expected to achieve to encourage them to stay on-task and to ensure each of them makes the best possible progress they can.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well. The strong relationships they enjoy help pupils to stay on-task and try things they find difficult. When pupils indicate that they need to leave the classroom this is generally managed well so that the classroom remains calm and other pupils are not disrupted. In most lessons teaching assistants support both the learning and behaviour well and act promptly when necessary to maintain pupils' concentration to complete work.
- However, in a few lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations for what the pupils, especially the most able, can achieve. Pupils' resistance to work is sometimes accepted too readily and they are not challenged or given alternative ways to try new things.
- Teachers have improved their marking of pupils' work so that pupils are clear about the next steps they should take but are not always given time in lessons to practise correcting the mistakes they have made or to complete the suggested steps of progress they are given.
- Teachers work hard to develop pupils' social skills by arranging for them to work cooperatively. For example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, pupils discussed in pairs how they would present a pictograph of favourite colours and shared the design of their graphs amicably.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most pupils are working below national expectations when they join the school. Pupils join at any age and stage in their education and a significant proportion of admissions at other than the usual times are at Years 10 and 11, of pupils who have usually been excluded from previous settings and who have often been out of education for periods of time. These pupils can often prove very difficult to engage with learning.
- From their various starting points, pupils at the lower school in Key Stages 1 and 2 make at least good progress in reading and writing and achieve well, usually meeting and sometimes exceeding the targets set for them. Progress in mathematics has been slower but action has been taken so that achievement is rising in this subject.
- Progress is more rapid at Key Stage 2 and the school has identified that pupils admitted at Key Stage 1 have not always reached a stage of development where they are ready to begin the learning expected of Year 1 pupils. Plans are well advanced to introduce aspects of an early years curriculum to meet their learning needs better.
- Achievement of pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 requires improvement. Although the quality of teaching has improved, this is not yet reflected in better outcomes for pupils in external examinations or in the progress pupils make over time, especially for the most able pupils. As more of the pupils progress through to the upper school from the good beginnings in Key Stages 1 and 2, achievement in both personal and academic development is gradually rising.
- Some pupils, especially those who have joined the school at later stages, cannot always see the relevance of what they are being taught. Unfortunately, sometimes pupils have missed out on acquiring good basic English and mathematical skills in previous schools and are reluctant to try things they find difficult because of their poor previous experiences.
- Pupils who find English and mathematics very difficult are offered additional help so that they can catch up to where they should be. For many pupils this is very successful because their learning needs are now being met. Progress in mathematics in the upper school has been hampered, however, by several changes of teacher.
- Older pupils often participate keenly and achieve well in practical activities such as in science, art, design technology and food studies and almost all enjoy computing. In a Year 11 art lesson, pupils were completely absorbed in producing exceptionally high quality portfolios which are likely to result in high

GCSE grades as in previous years.

- Links have been established with a number of external providers who offer work placements and access to vocational courses for pupils who will benefit from these. Courses such as horticulture and car mechanics sometimes lead to longer-term work opportunities. Pupils receive good careers advice but those who are taught in the school setting have insufficient access to more extensive work-related learning and to alternative forms of accreditation to prepare them well for their future lives. However, almost all obtain the offer of a college or project place when they leave.
- Pupils often enjoy physical education and some excel in this subject. A student who had been very unwilling to work at more academic subjects thoroughly enjoyed demonstrating trampolining techniques to Key Stage 2 pupils, helping them to put together routines and ensuring they did this safely.
- Progress of the very high proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after is at least as good as other pupils. Indeed, looked-after children can sometimes do better because of the good support provided to them. The very small number of girls and those from minority ethnic groups also achieve as well as others. Pupils who fall behind are quickly identified through the thorough assessment system and extra help is provided to get them back on track.

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

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| Unique reference number | 133368 |
| Local authority | Oldham |
| Inspection number | 439651 |

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

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 4–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 61 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Margaret Ramsbottom |
| Headteacher | Rebeckah Hollingsworth |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 February 2011 |
| Telephone number | 0161 7708281 |
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