

Brantwood Specialist School

1 Kenwood Bank, Nether Edge, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S7 1NU

Inspection dates	2–4 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils flourish in this welcoming and supportive school. Pupils make good progress from their often low starting points on entry into Brantwood. Previous barriers to learning are tackled well.
- Teachers plan learning carefully, taking account of pupils' individual needs to capture their interests. Recent leaders of mathematics and English have accelerated the pace of learning in these subjects.
- Skilled teaching, together with sensitive care and therapeutic support, meet pupils' complex social, emotional and behavioural needs well. Pupils are also well supported by teaching assistants and key workers. As a result, pupils' behaviour, personal development and self-esteem improve markedly during their time here.
- The work to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils is outstanding and pervades every aspect of the school's work. Disadvantaged pupils and the most able achieve equally well. Pupils develop qualities of respect, trust and valuing differences within the school and wider community well.
- The curriculum is personalised, not only to develop pupils academically and creatively, but also to ensure that pupils are safe and know how to keep safe: for example, from bullying from potential extremist views they may face.
- Work to ensure that pupils understand the community of Britain, and its legal and democratic customs, is threaded successfully across the citizenship curriculum.
- Parents speak passionately about how Brantwood has transformed their children's lives and enabled them to achieve well, often for the first time.
- Leadership is good. Staff, parents and pupils speak enthusiastically about the new headteacher. She has brought much-needed rigour to the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment which is now good. At the same time, she has continued to drive the shared visions and values of the school well.
- The proprietor and directors are fully involved in the life of the school and ensure that all independent school standards are met. They work together with staff successfully to ensure that pupils make good progress and are well prepared for their post-16 opportunities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Directors check the safety, care, welfare and pupils' attendance and personal and emotional development within the school assiduously but are not equally robust in checking the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress over time.
- The school improvement plan does not identify well enough the difference the school's work will make to the achievements of pupils.
- The sixth form requires improvement in order to be as good as the main school because recent improvements have yet to demonstrate their full impact.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the regular reports to directors that evaluate the impact of the school's work always include information on the progress and achievements of pupils.
- Refine the school improvement plan to include more measurable targets against which leaders and directors can measure the impact of teaching and learning on pupils' progress over time.
- Embed plans for the sixth form to ensure that it provides as good an education as the main school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Upon her appointment, the headteacher galvanised staff quickly by sharing her high expectations of what pupils can achieve academically to complement their good social, emotional and personal development. Staff, pupils and parents speak highly of her leadership. The positive impact of this leadership is evident in all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher and directors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have developed an improvement plan with a set of clear, appropriate priorities and actions that are reviewed regularly. As yet, there are insufficient measurable targets identified for pupils' academic progress so directors cannot check the impact of actions taken robustly enough in this area.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning have improved in the last year. Regular high-quality staff training and improvements in teachers' use of assessment of pupils' achievements in class are ensuring that work is tailored more effectively to pupils' needs and interests. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Schemes of work are in place for all National Curriculum subjects. The National Curriculum has been aligned closely to the practical elements of learning that lie at the heart of the school's aims. The practical curriculum inspires and entices pupils into action. Excellent art and craft work were seen during the inspection from individual three-dimensional creations, textile and animation work to communal large-scale felting projects.
- Work of the transitions and work experience manager, together with focused work in the curriculum, ensures that pupils access impartial advice and guidance as they move through school, including in the sixth form. In the past year, the quality of provision has improved in the sixth form with more opportunities for learners to take formal accreditations. The very recently appointed head of sixth form has quickly implemented strategies to help the sixth form on its journey to be as good as the rest of the school.
- The development of middle leaders was an urgent priority for the headteacher. Actions taken are transforming the impact of leadership in the school. Middle leaders report that they feel empowered and accountable for their subject specialisms, and welcome their increased involvement in the school's work. The impact of their work in English and mathematics is notable.
- Staff report that they are held to account more robustly for their pupils' achievements through the improved performance management arrangements and pupil assessment systems that have been developed over the past year. This is hastening the rate of improvement in pupils' learning over time.
- Partnerships with parents and carers are exemplary. They are a fundamental part of aiding pupils' smooth transition into school, gaining pupils' trust, engaging them in learning and then helping them succeed. All five parents who spoke to inspectors, and those who provided written comments about the school, are highly positive about the transformation in their children's lives since arriving at Brantwood.
- The school's excellent commitment to embracing equality and tackling discrimination of any kind is at the heart of its work. 'Celebration Fridays', the citizenship programme, the study of world religions and of cultures different from their own, add to pupils' understanding of the world beyond school. Such work contributes to pupils' good personal, social and emotional development during their time here.
- The headteacher has benefited from effective support in developing her leadership role through coaching and mentoring from one of the directors and support from the leader of Southfields School in Bradford.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The proprietor and directors have ensured that all independent standards are met. Since the last inspection, the proprietor has continued to invest in developing the school's provision to broaden opportunities for pupils effectively. The Eyam Centre in the Derbyshire Dales provides outdoor education to energise and motivate pupils in physical and practical endeavours. The provision is used well by pupils and valued by them. More recent investment has come with Tintagel, an additional building for sixth-form learners who now work in an imposing, yet welcoming atmosphere. These provisions are adding to pupils' enjoyment of, and engagement in, learning. Directors receive regular, detailed reports about all aspects of safeguarding, health and safety, pupils' attendance, personal development and welfare, and staff performance. However, they do not yet demand regular enough reports on the progress pupils are making in lessons. This limits their ability to challenge leaders on the full impact of the school's work on pupils' learning and achievements over time.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust checks are carried out on the suitability of staff and recruitment files are in excellent order. All staff are fully trained in child protection and safeguarding, including their statutory duties to prevent pupils being drawn into extremism, and in recognising signs of concern or when there are risks associated with pupils going missing for any reason. Timely action is taken in reporting concerns to social services when there are serious concerns about a pupil's well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers share a passion to do the best for their pupils and are well trained and supported. They have a detailed understanding of how to meet the needs of pupils with complex difficulties. They know their pupils well. Staff are adept at ensuring a calm, respectful working atmosphere in class.
- High-quality relationships developed between teachers and pupils mean that when potentially challenging incidents flare up they are quickly spotted and discreetly tackled, so learning can continue for other pupils without disruption. Pupils experiencing difficulties are carefully supported by other staff to return to the classrooms quickly and so not miss out on their learning.
- Learning is well planned and tailored to pupils' specific needs and interests. Teachers go out of their way to make lessons interesting so past 'reluctant learners' can take part and achieve well. This was seen in a delightful session where a pupil's interest in the police force was used creatively to develop literacy skills through exploration of the 'alpha beta' alphabet that police use.
- Improvements in the headteacher's monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning is ensuring more consistency in the quality of practice and in the work that pupils undertake. Pupils' books, including their practical work books are generally carefully marked. Pupils get regular feedback on how well they are doing. They say this helps them to understand what they are doing well and what they need to improve.
- Recent improvements have also been made to the way teachers assess pupils' work and record and track their achievements half-termly. Although teachers have a good understanding of what good progress means for each pupil, until very recently they have not expressed this in terms of formal targets for improvement. Consequently, pupils have not always been clear what they are aiming for or what success will look like in the long term.
- Practical lessons complement the formal morning lessons. These lessons build pupils' resilience and confidence to apply themselves to learning and to succeed creatively and socially.
- Pupils are highly positive about the support they receive from therapies such as speech and language, art and movement, and occupational therapy. Therapies are wrapped round the work pupils do during school hours and help them to make progress in their attitudes to school and ability to cope with their learning day.
- Recent appointments for the leadership of English and mathematics subjects are making their mark and increasing the achievements and aspirations of pupils. The number of pupils taking external, accredited qualifications increased last year and is increasing even further this year. Plans are currently being developed for more pupils to take entry level qualifications in English and mathematics to add to the current focus on GCSEs.
- Improvements to the stock of library books, their increased availability around school and the creative approach in encouraging pupils to read is making a positive difference to pupils' reading skills. Pupils read often without always knowing they are developing these skills, for example through the lunchtime comic club.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers, therapists and teaching assistants are skilled in working together to understand, support and manage the complex needs of the pupils in Brantwood. As a result, pupils' communication skills, behaviour and social skills develop well during their time here.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity plays a key part in building pupils' self-esteem. An excellent range of work takes place to enable pupils to understand and respect differences in others. Pupils also gain a good understanding of world cultures and religions, and the values that are key to taking a successful part in British society.

- Pupils enter the school after having experienced significant disruption to their education. Some have been out of education for up to two years and others have attended 'too many school places to remember'. Consequently, past attendance records have often been poor. Attendance rates jump once pupils settle into Brantwood.
- Attendance rates were just below average when compared with maintained secondary schools nationally last year. They dipped last term due to the particular circumstances of a few pupils but are above the average of those found in maintained special schools nationally. Attendance rates are tracked meticulously. Great care is taken to identify any pupil who does not arrive in school and parents or carers are immediately contacted. This helps to tackle barriers and then ensure that pupils return quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils often arrive at Brantwood with challenging and complex behavioural difficulties. Carefully managed induction procedures enable pupils to understand the expectations of good behaviour and the support that is available to help them improve.
- Behaviour around the school and grounds is usually good. Pupils come to classes promptly and strategies used by teachers enable them to quickly settle down to their learning. Lunchtimes are a joy to observe. Pupils sit with staff and other pupils enjoying their high-quality meals and sharing their thoughts of the day in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Teachers' record keeping on pupils' emotional, behavioural and personal needs are detailed. Information is used effectively to manage the experiences pupils gain in the classroom and beyond, and to minimise risks of poor behaviour flaring up unexpectedly.
- Appropriate, sensitive and consistent behaviour management strategies used by staff, along with the high staffing levels, mean that action can be taken quickly when any untoward incidents occur. Effective use is made of the ample facilities to manage difficult situations and enable pupils to settle down in a calm, safe and nurturing space.
- Incidents of misbehaviour are carefully recorded and responded to by staff. Records are monitored closely by leaders and directors to check that pupils' behaviour is improving as they move through the school. Records show there have been few sanctions issued since September. Pupils report that bullying of any type is rare because of the way they are taught to respect and value the differences in others.
- Pupils speak highly of how the headteacher, teachers and staff support them when they experience difficulties. They also appreciate the wide range of therapeutic support they receive. Collectively this support helps them manage their own challenging behaviours, builds their resilience and self-esteem, and supports improvement in their social and emotional development effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Most pupils arrive at Brantwood having experienced fractured, little or no formal education for a number of years. Consequently, most come with skills and knowledge well below that typical for their age. Sensitively planned transitions into school and the significant work undertaken to gain the trust of pupils ensures that pupils quickly settle in well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about these transitions.
- Once settled into the routines and expectations of the school, personalised programmes of study for each pupil help them to make good progress emotionally, socially and academically from these often low starting points. Work to improve pupils' communication skills is highly effective. Pupils who spoke to the inspector were insightful, articulate and keen to share their views.
- Progress is not always a smooth upward trend. It is at times affected by pupils' behavioural, emotional and mental health difficulties. When dips occur, carefully planned one-to-one sessions, therapies and interventions ensure that pupils' barriers are tackled quickly. This helps pupils regain the momentum in improving their skills, knowledge and achievements in the subjects they are studying and in their behaviour.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils make generally good progress over time, particularly in English and mathematics. Progress in practical subjects including textiles, felt-making and art-based activities is at times exceptional. This is due to the high-quality teaching, the high expectations adults have of the pupils and the wide range of resources available so pupils can freely explore their ideas and interests.

- Because of the care teachers take to adapt learning and activities to meet the individual needs and interests of all pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with the most complex special educational needs achieve equally well. The increased focus on accreditations is now ensuring that most-able pupils can benefit from formal qualifications. The number achieving formal accreditations has increased three-fold in the last two years.
- A wide range of work experience has been provided for older pupils and sixth-form learners. This is helping to develop their workplace skills and to widen their career choices. Last year, the small number of Year 11 pupils all made a successful transition into the post-16 world.

Sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because recent changes in leadership and provision have yet to make their mark. While it is getting better, it is not yet as good as that found in the main school. Improvements made in the last year have been hastened by the appointment of a head of sixth form in January. He has quickly gained a good understanding of how the sixth-form provision operates, learners' needs, the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information used to track learners' progress.
- The head of sixth form is developing more rigour to the arrangements to monitor and check that learners are achieving well. Together with the data manager and subject leaders for English and mathematics, he has plotted aspirational routes for learners to follow from their starting points. It is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Learners continue to develop their literacy, numeracy and communication skills in the sixth form and books show that they are continuing to make steady progress in their learning and skills. The formal curriculum is enhanced significantly by the rich range of work that is undertaken to improve learners' personal, social and emotional development, creativity and life skills.
- Hands-on taster courses at college, work experience in school, the local community and the creative, practical curriculum, including at the Eyam Centre, all add to learners' enjoyment of the sixth form. These experiences prepare learners well for the time they will leave. Learners who start the sixth form complete their courses. The small number who left last year at the age of 19 moved on successfully to their chosen courses.
- Learners report that the sixth form improved greatly in January following the move to a separate, well-resourced building. They say they feel very safe in school and have been well taught to develop skills that will help them succeed in the future. They also say they are taught to understand risks to their safety: for example, from the misuse of drugs and alcohol, the use of mobile technology, social media and extremism.
- Learners report that the headteacher, their teachers, key workers, therapists and the sexual health worker are all readily available to support them when they have concerns or are troubled, and they are confident that any concerns will be quickly tackled.

School details

Unique reference number	136936
Inspection number	10008895
DfE registration number	373/6002
This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.	
Type of school	Special school – social, emotional and mental health difficulties and autistic spectrum diagnosis
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of learners in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	8
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Mr Aonghus Gordon
Chair	Mr Aonghus Gordon
Head teacher	Ms Jen Rosenbrock
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,000
Telephone number	0114 258 9062
Website	www.rmt.org
Email address	admin@brantwood.rmt.org
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2012

Information about this school

- Brantwood School is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust group. It comprises three sites: Brantwood House for pupils aged 7 to 16, Tintagel House, located a short walk away for sixth-form learners, and the Eyam Centre, an outdoor education provision for all pupils. Each site has considerable grounds that are also used as part of the education on offer to pupils.
- The school seeks to rebuild pupils' engagement in learning and grow within a holistic, inclusive educational framework with the practical curriculum at its heart. Its aims are grounded in the approach of the educationalist Rudolph Steiner and principles of John Ruskin and William Morris.
- In November 2015, the school was given permission by the Department for Education to increase the number of pupils from 25 to 50 over the next few years. The directors are expanding provision in a planned, measured way to avoid disruption to the culture and atmosphere in the school.
- Twenty-nine pupils currently attend the school aged 7 to 19. The small sixth-form provision educates eight post-16 aged learners. Almost all pupils attend full time. At the time of the last inspection of education provision in June 2012, the school had six pupils and was judged to be good.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional or mental health difficulties, or who have an autistic spectrum diagnosis. All pupils have been referred to the school by one of five local authorities and have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- None of the pupils attend external alternative provision.
- All pupils have experienced significant turbulence in their education before attending Brantwood.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted at one day's notice. The lead inspector was accompanied by another of Her Majesty's Inspectors who observed the inspection practice over the two and a half days in school.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, the proprietor, four directors, a group of staff and the designated officer for child protection. She talked to pupils informally as she visited classrooms and observed lunchtime. She also spoke formally to representatives of the school council.
- The inspector observed learning in 10 lessons across the school. The headteacher joined the inspector on three of these visits.
- A wide range of school documents were scrutinised. These included the school's written evaluation of its work and its improvement plan, safeguarding policies and procedures, and fire, first aid, and health and safety policies. The inspector reviewed the information the school has on pupils' learning and achievements over time, checked pupils' work books and two reports directors received last term on the work of the school.
- At seven, the number of parental responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, was too small to enable the inspector see the results of the 12 questions. However, the five written comments made on Parent View were accessible and taken into account. The inspector spoke to five parents during the inspection and received eight letters or emails regarding their views. All of these comments have been considered as part of the inspection evidence. The responses to 26 staff questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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