

Great Howarth School

Great Howarth Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 9HJ

Inspection dates

11–12 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Satisfactory

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently good progress in all subjects.
- Leaders have not yet recruited high-quality staff to fill all teaching roles.
- Leaders have not provided enough opportunities for staff to share good practice across the school. As a result, some teachers are less effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Leaders are not always able to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, some pupils' underachievement is not tackled swiftly.
- Teachers do not always receive effective support to improve their teaching and enhance their subject knowledge across a wide range of curriculum areas.
- Some teachers do not match work to pupils' needs, nor provide lessons that engage and sustain the interest of pupils.
- Systems to develop, track and monitor pupils' reading skills are not well developed.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has made a strong impact on staff and pupils since her arrival. She is rapidly improving systems and raising standards.
- All staff work extremely well as a team. They have high expectations and form strong relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils have good behaviour, improved attendance and the motivation to learn.
- The new headteacher and the deputy headteacher are well supported by the proprietor. Consequently, the school has the capacity to make rapid improvement.
- Teachers skilfully manage pupils' behaviour. They establish a positive learning environment in their classrooms.
- Pupils are proud of their school and value their education. Attendance has rapidly improved.
- Pupils are well cared for by staff in the school because leaders have ensured that staff understand the needs of all pupils. The school works well with a range of agencies to provide pupils with effective care and welfare support.
- The deputy headteacher has ensured that systems to support pupils' welfare, health and safety are successful.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and training because of well-planned next steps and good careers advice.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress further by:
 - ensuring that all teachers match work to pupils' needs and sustain interest in lessons
 - providing more opportunities for the most effective teachers to sharpen the teaching of others by sharing good practice
 - recruiting further high-quality teaching staff to strengthen teaching and learning.

- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on teaching and pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that gaps in pupils' knowledge are swiftly identified and appropriate action is taken to accelerate pupils' progress
 - improving the teaching skills and enhancing the subject knowledge of some teachers so they are more effective in delivering across a wider range of curriculum subjects
 - implementing a system to support and improve pupils' reading skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- The new headteacher is driving improvements across the school, raising standards and providing clear direction. She has high aspirations, has correctly identified the school's areas for development and is working effectively, at pace, to ensure that strong foundations are in place to improve pupils' progress. However, leaders recognise that not all systems are yet fully in place to support good teaching and learning across the school.
- The school is not yet fully staffed with permanent teachers. The headteacher and the proprietor are resolute in their quest to appoint good-quality staff to improve teaching and learning across the school.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, planning and marking on a regular basis. Nonetheless, this is not always recorded and analysed frequently enough to identify strengths and areas of development. Leaders have not yet fully implemented appropriate systems to identify and share good practice and improve teaching and learning across the school. There are too few opportunities for highly effective teachers to share good practice with their colleagues. Consequently, some practice is less effective and pupils do not make strong progress.
- Leaders have introduced a framework for assessing the progress of pupils across the different ages and across the range of subjects. This does not always allow leaders to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding so that they can intervene swiftly and accelerate pupils' progress. However, leaders have recognised this weakness and have robust plans to improve the tracking of assessment across the school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have high expectations and ambitions for the school. They have ensured that the safeguarding and welfare of pupils is a priority. Effective policies and procedures are now in place to successfully promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils. For example, risk assessments and safety checks are regularly completed.
- Leaders have invested heavily in ensuring that a large number of key staff are highly skilled in leading safeguarding across the school. Consequently, teachers are well trained and staff are alert to the dangers and risks to all pupils. Staff have received a range of training on potential areas of risk for young people. For example, they have attended 'Prevent' training to help them to identify pupils who may be at risk of being radicalised. Safer recruitment practices are used when appointing new members of staff. However, training to improve teaching and learning is not as well established and consequently some staff are improving the progress of pupils more than others.
- Since the arrival of the new headteacher, staff now feel well supported and are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. Comments by members of staff on the online survey conducted by inspectors epitomised the views of many: 'I am incredibly proud to be part of Great Howarth School and to be in a position where I can give young people the educational opportunities they deserve.'
- Leaders are accurate in their self-evaluation and have a clear set of priorities to help the school develop in the future. Many of the areas for improvement for this inspection, such as implementing a system to support and improve pupils' reading skills, have already been recognised and steps are under way to address them.
- The curriculum is balanced and provides a range of opportunities for pupils. It is designed to meet the needs of each individual pupil. Pupils are assessed on entry and their prior learning and aspirations are established. Leaders tailor the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. The school endeavours to focus on pupils' strengths and interests to enable all pupils to achieve according to their potential.
- Trips and visits play a valuable role within the timetable, developing pupils' personal and social development, and often have a clear academic focus to the curriculum. Pupils are provided with diverse opportunities to experience life outside school, meet new people and learn social skills. For example, pupils have taken part in a variety of visits including to Bleakhold Animal Sanctuary and Smithills Farm.
- The school meets all the requirements in relation to the premises. Adequate external areas for play and relaxation are available on site. The local leisure centre is also used for physical activities, where pupils have access to showers and changing facilities under appropriate supervision.
- Careers education is well organised. Pupils are provided with clear next steps. Teachers use aspects of the curriculum to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Particular emphasis is placed on the knowledge pupils will need in later life, such as their legal rights and obligations, how to manage a budget and how to stay safe.
- Some pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders work closely with all providers and receive information about attendance, safety and progress for these pupils.

■ The governance of the school

- The proprietor provides effective governance and is fully informed about the school’s developments through the effective use of a commissioned school improvement partner and the head of education at Horizon Care and Education. Consequently, the proprietor is knowledgeable about the management of staff performance, the school’s achievements and the quality of teaching. He provides appropriate support and challenge to the leadership in the school.
- The proprietor works effectively with the headteacher and welcomes the skills that she brings to the school. He is highly committed to improving the school and has provided a well-organised support system to secure development in the school. For example, the headteacher meets regularly with other school leaders within the Horizon Care and Education group to share ideas and gain further support.
- The proprietor has a good grasp of the school’s finances and has ensured a solid financial future.
- The proprietor and headteacher ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff are recruited in line with safeguarding requirements and pre-employment medical checks are undertaken

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Leaders do not provide staff with enough opportunities to share good practice. Staff have not always been provided with appropriate training. Some staff do not have strong teaching skills or specific subject knowledge to effectively deliver the wide-ranging curriculum. As a result, the quality of teaching varies across the range of subjects and across different classes.
- The school offers a wide choice of courses that are well matched to pupils’ needs. Despite this, several teachers do not match work to pupils’ needs in lessons, which means that pupils lose interest and learning slows.
- Leaders recognise the importance of reading for pleasure and have provided library membership for all pupils. The school has appropriate books available for pupils to use and teachers plan for reading in all lessons. The monitoring and tracking of pupils’ reading is at an early stage, which means that staff have not fully identified all the gaps. Consequently, some pupils do not always make fast enough progress in developing their reading skills.
- Staff develop good relationships with pupils and are highly motivated to help them succeed. In the best lessons, teaching assistants effectively support the needs of pupils and they make strides in progress.
- The small class sizes allow teachers and teaching assistants to target individual support for pupils, so that areas of uncertainty are clarified and misconceptions tackled. In some lessons, teachers carefully use probing questions to deepen pupils’ understanding even further.
- Teachers consistently follow the school’s marking policy to show pupils where they have gone wrong and what they need to do to improve their learning to make quicker progress. Books show pupils’ pride in their work across a wide range of subjects.
- Some teachers know their pupils well and use a variety of well-planned techniques that effectively engage pupils in learning. Teachers make good use of praise to keep pupils focused on their work. Daily reward cards are valued by pupils: they are keen to work hard and gain points. As a result, many pupils have good attitudes to learning.
- The small size of the school means that it is not always possible to offer the full range of physical education on site. The school recognises that a way forward is to use local facilities to ensure that pupils have access to various activities which can support a healthy lifestyle.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good. Staff understand the importance of safeguarding within the school. Leaders work successfully with parents, carers and external agencies to develop effective lines of regular communication and ensure that any concerns about pupils are fully followed up.

- Pupils learn about the world in which they live through a range of visits and visitors. These activities are planned to enhance learning and develop pupils' life skills. For example, pupils have visited Manchester Museum and the Imperial War Museum to support their learning in science and history.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their lives. They are provided with careers interviews and supported with their choices and next steps in Year 11.
- Leaders use assemblies and group work to educate pupils about safety. For example, inspectors observed a lesson alerting pupils to the dangers and risks of substance abuse, and where to seek help.
- The school works well with other agencies to keep pupils safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and that they can approach teachers if they have concerns.
- The school has adopted all the required health and safety policies. Records are kept to ensure that all safety equipment is correctly maintained. In addition, procedures to guard against the risks of fire are followed with care. The school site is secure. Appropriate risk assessments are made and followed for all activities, both on and away from the school site. Safety awareness is good: staff meet weekly to discuss pupils' needs and to amend pupils' behaviour for learning plans.
- Leaders ensure that off-site provision accessed by pupils is purposeful, well organised and risk assessed. Pupils attend well and engage in organised activities that extend their learning and offer clear next step careers opportunities beyond 16.
- Comments provided on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as text responses support inspectors' findings regarding personal development in the school. For example: 'I find that the school never gives up on young people and always looks at alternative ways to support them when they are experiencing a difficult time. The school is very warm and welcoming and the staff are always willing to help.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils who have exhibited extremely challenging behaviour in their previous schools cooperate with staff and generally work well in class. This is because staff use effective strategies and build strong relationships with pupils. Staff display high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, the school building is well looked after and respected by pupils.
- Pupils are placed in the school because their behaviour has resulted in exclusions from their previous schools. The school uses a range of techniques to manage pupils' behaviour and to encourage them to participate in learning. Reward cards are highly valued by all pupils and effective in motivating pupils and improving pupils' attitudes to learning.
- The ratio between staff and pupils is often two-to-one, and pupils are supervised exceptionally well at all times. Staff are very skilled at reducing disruptive behaviour due to regular training provided by the school. Staff consistently use the behaviour policy. Incidents of misbehaviour are monitored and have significantly decreased over time.
- Lunchtimes and break times are well supervised by staff. Pupils are well behaved, show respect and enjoy spending time with staff and other pupils. Pupils expressed in a meeting that behaviour is controlled well in the school and that they enjoy school.
- Pupils take pride in their work because staff have high expectations which they regularly communicate to pupils.
- Most of the pupils had very poor attendance in their previous schools but they now attend school regularly. This is because the school provides a safe, non-threatening environment in which pupils can learn. Leaders work hard to successfully form good relationships with parents and care homes.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils do not read widely and often. The headteacher has planned the introduction of a new reading scheme but this is not yet in place. Pupils' reading development is not tracked and monitored accurately. Leaders do not know which pupils need to catch up because they have not been rigorously assessed. Leaders are unable to establish the impact of the school's work to improve reading.
- As the school has only been functioning for just over one year, no pupils have received results for external examinations. A number of pupils have taken entry level and GCSE examinations in the current year but results are not yet known.
- Pupils are placed in the school at very short notice throughout the year. The school promptly carries out its own assessments to establish pupils' attainment on entry to the school from which it sets appropriate targets for pupils' progress. Most pupils who currently attend the school have been on roll for under a

year. Information provided to inspectors shows that pupils make reasonable progress.

- A very small number of pupils stay in the school for a short time. Staff support these pupils by providing access to an appropriate curriculum. Despite well-organised support from teachers and leaders, the impact on their progress and next steps in education is limited.
- Pupils, most of whom have been unsuccessful in a mainstream school setting, become much more confident learners than previously. They make good progress in their personal development. For example, pupils follow appropriate level 1 and 2 qualifications to develop their employability and life skills.
- A very small number of pupils receive their education from a virtual school. Information provided by leaders reveals that pupils accessing the virtual school are making good progress towards appropriate qualifications.
- The abilities of the most able pupils are recognised. They are placed on appropriate level GCSE examination courses. However, not all teachers provide work that is well suited to pupils' needs and sometimes the progress of the most able is slowed.
- Careers guidance is well organised and pupils' achievements are enhanced by opportunities to fill in application forms for colleges, participation in taster visits to colleges, writing their own curriculum vitae and taking an active part in mock interviews. The work placement experiences, which includes fire service cadets and military preparation training to join the armed forces, are preparing them well for the world of work.

School details

Unique reference number	135753
Inspection number	10006096
DfE registration number	354/6035

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	SEMH – social, emotional and mental health
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	Nine
Proprietor	Paul Callander
Headteacher	Jane Cresswell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000
Telephone number	01706 631804
Website	www.horizoncare.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@horizoncare.co.uk
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 October 2012

Information about this school

- Great Howarth School is part of the Horizon Care and Education Group. The school opened in 2008 as Horizon School Whitefield. It changed its name to Great Howarth School in 2014.
- The school states that its aim is 'to facilitate personal educational achievement in an environment that is stimulating and inspires individual success'. Its objectives are to:
 - value the individual
 - provide a safe environment
 - work to pupils' strengths
 - manage the professional support needs of children
 - maintain close links with families
 - have high expectations of ourselves and others
 - have core values of integrity, courtesy, trust and care.
- Pupils often join the school after a history of exclusion and long-term absence from mainstream schools or other special school provision.
- Staff specialise in working with young people with a range of complex needs and specifically in supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school is registered for 24 pupils, aged from 11 to 16 years.
- Most pupils have a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses a variety of external educational providers such as military preparation training, outdoor education providers and Towneley Hall.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Telephone calls were made to the school improvement adviser with whom the school works in partnership, the virtual school headteacher, the local authority designated officer and the school proprietor.
- Inspectors also spoke by telephone to a member of staff from the Military Preparation Training Centre and made a visit to Towneley Hall.
- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons across all year groups. They also heard a few pupils read. A lesson was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked carefully at pupils' books and files while in lessons. They separately engaged in a detailed analysis of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct and behaviour as they arrived at the school, during break and lunchtimes, and as they left the school premises at the end of the day, as well as in lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to a small group of pupils to gather their views of the school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work; scrutinised data about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance; looked at documents used by leaders to check the school's work; and viewed records relating to the monitoring of teaching.
- School policies and other documentation provided by the school were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence. Records relating to safeguarding, pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour were scrutinised. During the inspection, consideration was given as to how the school prepares its pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Inspectors took account of the five responses to Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gena Merrett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

