

Firwood Manor Preparatory School

Broadway, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 0AD

Inspection dates

28–30 March 2017

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not made sure that teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good enough. As a result, all groups of pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have not been able to ensure that teachers collaborate effectively to drive forward improvement in learning.
- Opportunities for teachers to develop and hone their skills by taking part in professional development are not well used.
- The outcomes pupils that achieve are too variable across subjects, groups and lessons.
- Teachers do not always build on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure that pupils deepen their learning across all subjects.
- Although the school is very well equipped, pupils do not make the best of opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT), science and other specialist resources that would enhance their skills and understanding.
- Different groups of pupils do not make consistently good progress over time, particularly the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery Year and continue to make good progress in reception due to good-quality teaching and leadership.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development.
- All pupils gained their first choice of school at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They show respect for each other and their teachers.
- Pupils feel safe, are well cared for and enjoy school. The school's curriculum effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Most pupils participate in a wide range of enjoyable extra-curricular activities.

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 leadership and management, so that outcomes improve, by:
 - enhancing the impact that evidence gathered from the observation of teaching has on pupils' learning
 - developing leadership throughout the school to enhance the way in which teachers collaborate and work together in a team
 - increasing the impact professional development has on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are always challenged by their work and make consistently good progress
 - developing the support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that it has a more consistent impact on their learning and progress
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge and their use of specialist resources, so that they can better develop pupils' skills across a range of subjects, particularly in information and communication technology and investigative science.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not used information from a variety of monitoring and evaluation activities effectively enough to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the progress of a small minority of pupils varies and is not always good enough.
- Leaders have a well-articulated vision for the school to nurture and develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They provide a rich range of learning resources. However, these resources are not always used to their optimum capacity to promote pupils' learning.
- Leaders ensure that all staff are highly motivated and committed to their pupils. This leads to pupils' good behaviour and high levels of care.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. At the time of the inspection, both the headteacher and deputy headteacher also had responsibility as class teachers. This has limited their capacity to ensure that the planned improvements to teaching, learning and assessment have been introduced and monitored robustly enough.
- A wide range of online learning is available for the professional development of staff. Staff also take part in face-to-face training to ensure that their knowledge and skills in terms of safeguarding pupils are of good quality. The headteacher recognises that more sharing of good practice between staff and better teamwork are necessary to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have introduced a well thought through and coherent curriculum, including a good programme of citizenship and personal, health and social education that provides pupils with good opportunities to understand how society works. Pupils enjoy learning Spanish and make particularly good progress in this subject.
- Staff make sure that the school rules are applied appropriately and consistently. As a result, bullying is seen by pupils as absolutely unacceptable. Pupils show respect for each other, whatever their backgrounds, cultures or beliefs. Leaders make sure that fundamental British values are promoted effectively.
- The proprietor and leaders ensure that the site is secure and safe, and that there has been good investment in resources. All the required safety checks are carried out assiduously. The corridors, classrooms and other areas are well maintained and tidy and pupils show respect for their own environment. The school has a wide range of specialist resources, including a science room, an ICT suite, a music room, a large hall and grounds that offer ample opportunities for physical education and outdoor learning.
- Leaders are fully aware of the 'Prevent' duty, keeping children safe from sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism, and translate this into school policies. They have good links with the local authority but partnership working with local authorities that manage pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is not as good as it should be.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietor, supported by one of the directors, oversees the work of the headteacher and the school.
- When assessing the strengths and areas for improvement of the school, the proprietor and directors have focused too heavily on pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 and not looked in sufficient depth at progress in each class.
- Although information is available on starting points and a system is used to monitor progress, this evidence is not used sufficiently effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning or outcomes across all parts of the school.
- The proprietor has regular meetings with the headteacher and has a detailed understanding of the challenges the school faces. He is very supportive of the school and determined to make the necessary improvements. He and other leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are fully met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have had appropriate training to prevent and tackle pupils' possible vulnerability to a range of safeguarding issues.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure safe recruitment of staff. The school publishes its safeguarding policy on its website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough and as a consequence, a significant number of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in some of their subjects.
- In too many classes, pupils are not challenged to apply their literacy and mathematical skills across a range of subjects. The most able pupils do not have enough opportunities to deepen their understanding and knowledge.
- Assessment is used to accurately measure pupils' progress. However, it is not used consistently enough by teachers to support pupils' learning needs and to set challenging targets.
- Teachers mark pupils' work frequently, but they do not always use the information they gain from pupils' work to plan tasks at an appropriate level.
- Homework is set regularly, but teachers do not always do enough to guide parents about how they can aid their child's learning.
- The small numbers of pupils in some classes mean that many pupils receive one-to-one support from teachers or teaching assistants. However, in a few cases the impact of teaching assistants' work is not measured precisely enough. In some classes, teaching assistants spend too long simply listening to the teacher.
- Teaching and assessment in Year 6 ensure that most pupils develop the skills and understanding necessary to make a successful transition to the next stages of their education. Teaching in the early years ensures that children make good progress.

- Teachers perform best when they use their specialist subject knowledge, for example when teaching Spanish, but are they not always confident enough to give clear explanations that develop deeper understanding in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and articulate and readily told inspectors their views of the school and what they liked and disliked.
- Pupils are well motivated and understand the importance of education. Generally, they try hard in lessons and want to do well.
- Pupils feel well supported and know that the adults in school have their best interests at heart.
- Older pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of circumstances, including online.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to exercise in the spacious school grounds. Often, the staff act as role models and will join in with games and activities.
- Bullying is very rare and when it does happen is usually limited to minor name-calling. In the very few cases when it does happen, staff work well with pupils to ensure that the situation is resolved and not repeated.
- Parents believe the school is a caring and supportive environment where their children are encouraged to thrive.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils work and play together extremely well and little adult intervention is necessary. They have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and how to behave in social situations.
- Pupils try hard in lessons and even when they are not fully engaged by learning activities they do not disrupt the learning of others.
- Teachers' expectations of behaviour are very high and as a result, pupils' conduct is excellent. Pupils show respect for the school environment, the site is litter-free and they volunteer to tidy up after messy activities.
- No incidents of poor behaviour were seen throughout the inspection and school records indicate that this is typical of what normally occurs.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- While many pupils make good progress, this is not sustained during the whole week or across different year groups or subjects. However, current rates of progress in

mathematics and English show that very few pupils will reach the end of Year 6 without being at the expected standard.

- From their starting points, pupils do not always make good progress across subjects and year groups. This is caused by the variability in the quality of teaching and assessment. Teachers do not always use challenging enough targets for the most able or for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The work in pupils' books confirms the inconsistency of progress between subjects and groups, although this is not always identified by leaders.
- Pupils show that they have developed a good understanding of several subjects, including mathematics, English, Spanish and humanities. They produce artwork of a very high standard and participate with enthusiasm in physical activities and games.
- A high proportion of pupils gain admittance to their first choice of school at the end of Year 6, by successfully passing entrance tests. They often move into selective grammar schools.
- Pupils usually enter the school with well-developed reading skills. Their progress in reading is maintained throughout the school so they reach high standards and levels of fluency by the time they leave. The small number of pupils entering the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress over time, although there is variation between subjects and year groups.

Early years provision

Good

- At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was fulfilling the role of temporary class teacher in the early years until a new member of staff was due to join the school. The variability in learning and progress found in other parts of the school was not replicated in the early years. All groups of children make good progress, particularly in their speaking and listening, reading and writing, and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Phonics is used well to support learning. In lessons, children in the Nursery and Reception classes work cooperatively together and they are provided with an appropriate balance of adult led and child-led activities. As a result, they develop good attitudes to learning.
- Leadership of the early years provision is good. Staff work together as a team and have and carry out frequent and detailed checks on learning, which are then used to devise the next steps in learning for pupils.
- Parents are kept well informed about their children's learning and this enables them to work with the school to aid children's personal development.
- It is clear that children feel safe and secure in the Nursery and Reception classes, they work and play in a very harmonious atmosphere.
- The school meets the independent school standards in respect of the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	105587
DfE registration number	353/6017
Inspection number	10012976

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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Ali Khan (Alpha Schools Ltd)
Chair	Mr Ali Khan
Headteacher	Caroline Greenwood
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,270
Telephone number	0161 620 6570
Website	www.firwoodmanorschool.co.uk
Email address	secretary@firwoodmanorschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Firwood Manor is a non-selective independent preparatory school for boys and girls, aged two to 11 years, and is part of the Alpha Schools Group.
- The early years provision consists of a Nursery class and a Reception class. Pupils are taught in a joint Year 1 and 2 class, and in single-aged classes in the rest of the school.
- There are a small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A tiny minority of pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The headteacher has been in post since June 2014.

- The school was previously inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in October 2011 and was judged to be good.
- The school offers care before and after school. The large majority of pupils live in the local town and surrounding areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes on several occasions to observe teaching, learning and assessment, including one observation carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- They scrutinised a wide range of pupils' work and talked with them about the school. They also heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, leaders and the proprietor.
- They analysed 24 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 15 questionnaires returned by staff. They considered all written comments from parents that were made alongside the questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school throughout the day and scrutinised a range of school records and documentation, including all those pertaining to the independent school standards. They also checked the compliance of premises and facilities against the relevant standards.
- An inspector shadowed the inspection team as part of his training programme but took no part in the inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Johnson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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