

Great Howarth School

Great Howarth Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 9HJ

Inspection dates

3–5 July 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher’s actions have been effective in improving the quality of education at the school since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have mainly high expectations of pupils’ work.
- Leaders have created a safe learning environment, where pupils trust adults to look after them well.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. Adults manage the infrequent episodes of misbehaviour effectively.
- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor has a secure understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school.
- The director of education provides strong challenge and support to the school, holding the headteacher to account effectively.
- Leaders do not currently track pupils’ progress in some subjects as closely as possible.
- Sometimes, teachers do not provide challenging enough work for the most able pupils in mathematics. They also occasionally miss the opportunity to ask questions to deepen pupils’ learning.
- Attendance is below the national average.

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 teachers are more consistent in providing work that challenges the most able, especially in mathematics, by:
 - routinely using effective questioning to deepen learning
 - setting suitably demanding tasks, taking account of pupils' needs.
- Ensure that leaders further develop their assessment and tracking procedures, so that they can check pupils' progress accurately in all subjects.
- Continue with their actions to reduce pupils' rate of absence so that it comes closer to the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has taken effective action to improve the quality of education at Great Howarth School. She has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. She devises detailed action plans that focus sharply on developing teaching and learning.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards and other requirements are met.
- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Leaders have now recruited permanent members of staff, who have brought more stability to the school. Leaders have improved the quality of training they provide for staff, which has strengthened teachers' effectiveness. There is also an improved approach to the teaching of reading. Because of these actions, pupils are now making strong progress from their low starting points.
- The headteacher has a deep knowledge of the pupils who attend the school. She fully understands their difficulties, which are associated with their social and emotional development and their mental health. She shows determination and energy in ensuring that staff meet pupils' needs as fully as possible.
- There is a more robust system in place for checking on the quality of teaching and managing teachers' performance. The headteacher now sets clearer targets for teachers, which are focused on ensuring that pupils make good progress. She carries out a range of activities to monitor teaching and learning, such as observations of lessons and analysis of pupils' work. Teachers receive helpful feedback to enable them to address any areas for development that the headteacher identifies. These strategies have contributed effectively to the improvements in teaching and learning.
- The headteacher has revised the school's assessment and tracking systems. They now provide a clearer picture for leaders of the amount of progress pupils make in several subjects, including English and mathematics. However, leaders have not included all subjects in the new system, which means that they do not yet track pupils' progress in some subjects as closely as they could.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding they receive for their children looked after, enabling them to make strong progress. They make bids for specific amounts of funding during the regular review of each pupil's personal education plan. They use this to provide a range of support for pupils' needs. For example, they provide training for staff to enhance their knowledge of pupils' personal development and issues concerned with mental health.
- The morale of staff is high. In their discussion with the lead inspector and in their responses to the staff survey they made very positive comments about their work in school. Typically, staff feel 'supported' and 'extremely proud to be a member of the team'. They appreciate the training that leaders provide. They attend courses that are relevant to their role. They also have opportunities to share and observe strong practice. These take place in school and in other schools in the company. Staff say that leaders do all they can to manage their workload.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders adapt it well to meet pupils' needs. For example, they teach pupils in different venues, such as a bird sanctuary. This approach supports pupils' interests and engages reluctant learners more successfully. Leaders actively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as their understanding of fundamental British values.

Governance

- There are no governors in the school. There is a director of education who is responsible for checking the effectiveness of the headteacher and the quality of education the school provides. She has a very secure grasp of the strengths and areas for development in the school. She ensures that the headteacher provides her with regular reports to keep her up to date. She challenges strongly on a range of issues, including topics such as the assessment of pupils. She makes frequent checks on the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and issues. The director of education regularly reports her findings to the proprietor.
- The proprietor has a clear picture of the progress that the school has made since the last inspection. He analyses regular reports about the actions the school takes to secure improvements. He keeps in close communication with the headteacher and with the director of education. He is ambitious for pupils to succeed and for the school to provide them with the best possible education.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures are clear and the designated lead keeps detailed records, promptly taking appropriate action about any concerns.
- The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy, which complies with all the government's current requirements. The headteacher makes this available on request. The school does not have its own website, but the policy also appears on the company's website.
- The school's record of vetting and checks on members of staff is thorough and meets requirements. The designated lead is clear about the correct action to take, should any issues arise.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and fully understand the various signs of abuse. They know their pupils well. Leaders provide staff with extra training that is relevant to the context of the school. For example, staff have received training in understanding post-traumatic stress disorder, which can be associated with pupils who have mental health needs and suffer abuse.
- Pupils feel safe and teachers ensure that they have information to help them to stay safe. For example, they provide information about cyber bullying and how to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and manage it effectively. They encourage pupils with well-targeted words of praise. This contributes well to their spiritual development and helps to increase their self-esteem.
- Staff assess their pupils' understanding effectively. They provide helpful support when pupils need it. They skilfully revise tasks to address any misconceptions that pupils may develop. Teachers adhere to the school's recently revised feedback policy.
- Teachers have mainly high expectations of pupils' work. They show secure knowledge of their subject and mostly use it to plan lessons that interest pupils. They now match pupils' work to their needs in most subjects. However, in mathematics, the most able sometimes complete work that is too easy for them. This means that they do not have the opportunity to deepen their learning by grappling with more challenging concepts.
- Teachers have warm relationships with pupils and they encourage them to have positive attitudes to their learning. Occasionally, pupils' social, emotional and mental health difficulties result in a lack of engagement in their task. In these circumstances, staff are skilled at redirecting pupils, so that they do not lose too much learning time.
- For the most part, staff question pupils well. They encourage them to think hard and try different approaches to their work, taking into consideration their various needs. Sometimes, however, adults' interaction with pupils is more concerned with organising pupils' activities than finding ways to extend their learning.
- The school gives useful assessment information to parents and carers, so that they know how well their children are doing. This comes in the form of annual reports and periodic summaries of progress.
- Staff organise regular homework that supports pupils' needs, for example developing their skills in English. They report to the headteacher at the weekly staff meeting on whether pupils have completed their homework.
- Teachers challenge stereotypes, including on the infrequent occasions where pupils may make comments prompted by their social, emotional and mental health needs. In personal, social, health and economic education, they teach key values, such as respect, and model them in their relationships with pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has an open culture that contributes effectively to an atmosphere of trust. Pupils feel able to confide in adults, if they have any concerns, knowing that adults will listen and act if necessary.
- Leaders provide well-organised careers advice in school. Pupils have access to a personal independent adviser, which ensures that the guidance they receive is impartial. This helps pupils to make decisions about the next stages of their education or employment.
- There is very little bullying of any kind in school. Pupils get on well with each other and they benefit from the warm relationships that staff engender. They have also developed a considerable degree of self-confidence, given their needs. Pupils who spoke with the

inspector showed politeness and a willingness to engage in conversation.

- Leaders give pupils opportunities to increase their understanding of responsibility and to reflect on what it is to be a good citizen. Pupils regularly raise funds for various charities, for instance.
- Staff ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop their independence. For example, pupils who study food technology buy their own ingredients at the supermarket, under appropriate adult supervision. However, on occasion, adults miss opportunities to encourage pupils' independence in their work by not enabling them to perform simple tasks in class for themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Adults ensure that pupils' conduct is good. School is an orderly place, where pupils are clear about conventions and routines.
- Teachers' expectations of behaviour are high. Occasionally, some pupils show a reluctance to cooperate, which is influenced by their needs. Adults manage these situations effectively. They do not allow misbehaviour to disrupt learning to any great extent.
- Leaders do all they can to ensure that pupils attend school as often as possible. Their strategies include telephone calls to parents or carers as soon as it becomes clear that a pupil is absent. Leaders also send a series of letters, if a pupil's absence becomes a concern. Despite leaders' best efforts, the absence rate for the school is above the national average. However, certain factors have an adverse effect on the absence rate. At times, it is necessary to move pupils from their home to a secure location. Even though they cannot attend school, their rate of absence increases, because they remain on the school roll.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school has a fluctuating population of pupils, with some arriving and departing within the same year. Many have missed significant periods of learning before they arrive because of their needs. Nevertheless, from typically low starting points, current pupils make good progress across most subjects and year groups in their time at the school. In English in Year 10, for instance, pupils show increasingly strong skills in inference when responding to texts. Sometimes, however, the most able pupils do not receive work in mathematics that stretches them sufficiently.
- There are typically fewer than five pupils who attain qualifications in Year 11. However, in 2017, pupils in this year group all went on to destinations that enabled them to continue with their education, employment or training. These were either a college or a training provider. Pupils in the current Year 11 also have intended destinations. They have already gained functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Most pupils acquire English and mathematics qualifications. Some achieve unit awards in various skills, such as motor mechanics, which enable them to follow specific employment paths. Attainment is typically low by national standards, however, which is related to

pupils' special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

- Leaders provide a good range of other paths and qualifications, including GCSE courses in science, history and religious education, as well as unit awards in, for example, animal care. There are also courses to prepare students for the world of work. These ensure that pupils in Year 11 are ready for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- There has been considerable improvement in pupils' reading since the previous inspection. Staff now plan activities that enable pupils to read widely and often. Pupils are now developing essential reading skills, such as comprehension, to good effect, given their low starting points. Another new development is 'reading for pleasure' time in lessons each day. Teachers also read at this time, to act as a role model to pupils. They then ask pupils to recap what they have read and predict what will happen next. To support this work, leaders have created a library area, with a range of new and attractive books that pupils may borrow.

School details

Unique reference number	135753
DfE registration number	354/6035
Inspection number	10048618

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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Paul Callander
Headteacher	Jane Cresswell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000
Telephone number	01706 631804
Website	www.horizoncare.co.uk
Email address	greathowarthhead@horizoncare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–12 May 2016

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 'inspire lasting change in our pupils and enable them to achieve beyond their goals and to have the best possible start to adult life'. Its objectives are to:
 - provide a safe environment
 - support and challenge pupils to enable them to move on to the next stage of their life equipped with a range of qualifications, accreditation and essential life skills

- manage the professional support needs of children
 - maintain close links with families
 - have high expectations of ourselves and others
 - have core values of integrity, inclusion, compassion, innovation, quality and accountability
 - value the individual.
- Pupils often join the school after a history of exclusion and long-term absence from mainstream schools or other special school provision.
 - Staff are trained specifically to support pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.
 - The school is registered for 35 pupils, aged from seven to 18 years. All current pupils are in classes from Year 7 to Year 11.
 - Most pupils have an education, health and care plan.
 - The school emphasises learning outside the classroom, enabling pupils to have access to a range of external educational opportunities. Staff engage pupils in learning by teaching them in various places, such as a pet shop or a bird sanctuary.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a range of activities, including a tour of the school site, to check that the school complies with the independent school standards.
- The inspector observed teaching across the school and scrutinised work in pupils' books.
- The inspector observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and at various points during the school day.
- The inspector visited two external venues where members of staff teach pupils. These were a pet shop and a bird sanctuary.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, the director of education, the headteacher and other members of staff. The inspector also had a formal meeting with two pupils and spoke informally with two others.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Seven members of staff, other than the headteacher, gave the inspector written responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' survey.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with the designated officer for Rochdale local authority.
- The inspector examined school policies to check that they are compliant with the independent school standards and to provide additional information for the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed the school's records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. The inspector also considered the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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