

# Moorfield Learning Centre

Moorfield Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA13 9RS

## Inspection dates

11–13 December 2018

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	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The school's benchmarks to measure pupils' progress lack precision. This makes it tricky for leaders and teachers to evaluate accurately how well pupils are progressing academically.
- Leaders have been unsuccessful in appointing a qualified teacher to lead the school. In the interim, the proprietary group has recruited a qualified teacher to help improve the quality of teaching and learning. It is early days, so leaders' plans are not well developed enough to have had any measurable impact.
- The school's plans and curriculum policy meet the requirements of the independent school standards. However, the curriculum plans are insufficiently detailed to ensure that pupils acquire the essential subject knowledge during the short time they attend the school.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Lack of specialist teachers' subject knowledge, detailed curriculum plans, and explicit learning objectives limit the pace and challenge of lessons.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. This has been the focus of the school's work since it opened. Despite pupils' history of educational failure, almost all improve their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning, because of the support and help they receive.
- This school is a haven for many of its pupils. Staff are highly skilled at helping pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to overcome their different barriers to learning, such as social communication, anxiety and low self-esteem.
- Leaders help pupils to realise their ambitions, whether to return to mainstream school or move on to college or employment. They equip pupils with the personal and social skills they need to be successful in the workplace or educational setting.
- In the short time the school has been open, the school has transformed the lives of some of its most vulnerable pupils. This is the first time for these pupils they have felt safe, happy and successful at school.
- The proprietary group has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.

### 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 leadership and management of the school, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils by:
  - developing more detailed curriculum plans, which set out clearly the essential knowledge that leaders want pupils to acquire
  - providing teachers with subject-specific training and support to help them plan learning to better meet the needs of pupils
  - setting out clearly the school's measures and benchmarks of pupils' progress, so that leaders have an accurate view of how well pupils are achieving.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The proprietary group and leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- In the few months since the school has opened, the proprietary group and leaders have demonstrated their ability to turn their vision into reality. They have made sure that the school is successful in helping some of the most vulnerable pupils to re-engage successfully with education. However, there is still further work to do if these pupils are to capitalise on their new-found readiness to learn by making stronger academic progress.
- Despite an overly rosy view of the school's performance, leaders have identified accurately the school's strengths and weaknesses. The actions they have taken since the school opened have had a positive impact on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Leaders have identified appropriate priorities for further development, focusing on pupils' academic learning.
- Overall, the school's curriculum is fit for purpose. Leaders have put in place a curriculum policy and plans that meet the requirements of the independent school standards. Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum which includes literacy and numeracy. However, the plans are not sufficiently detailed to ensure that teachers focus on the essential subject knowledge leaders intend pupils to acquire during their short time at the school. Consequently, teachers are unclear about the specific subject content which should be taught. This lack of precise long- and medium-term planning has a negative impact on pupils' progress, particularly in those subjects where teachers are not subject specialists.
- Leaders have made sure the school is able to offer a range of accredited courses to meet the needs of pupils' different interests, aptitudes and abilities. In these early days, non-subject-specialist teachers rely on examination syllabuses to inform their planning. Leaders have put in place training and support in some subjects. Teachers work successfully to overcome their lack of experience and expertise so that pupils cover the course content.
- Leaders track pupils' progress each month. However, the system does not provide sufficiently detailed information about the progress that pupils make from their different starting points. Consequently, leaders do not have a systematic and reliable way of evaluating how well pupils are doing over time.
- Staff morale is good. Staff feel well supported by school leaders. They are encouraged to share their ideas and ask for help when they need it. Frequent supervision meetings provide an opportunity for staff to discuss the challenges of their jobs, confident that the headteacher will listen attentively and respond appropriately.
- Leaders have invested in training for all staff to help them to do their jobs well. Training has focused on safeguarding and meeting the welfare needs of pupils. This has paid dividends because teachers are adept in working successfully to help pupils re-engage with education and overcome some of their barriers to learning. However, teaching staff have not had sufficient training to develop further their skills and expertise to plan, deliver and evaluate learning in the range of academic subjects they are required to teach.
- The school works well with pupils with SEND. Leaders are adept in meeting the diverse needs of the pupils referred to them. They make sure that they communicate well with

schools and the local authority about how well these pupils are getting on. Leaders ensure that staff have the expertise to support pupils with specific needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). As a result, these pupils benefit from the bespoke provision the school offers.

- Leaders are resolute in their determination to give every child and young person a chance at making a success of school. Leaders' ambitious vision for this school is shared by the staff. External partners, including schools and the local authority, admire the way that this team 'go the extra mile' to get pupils' education 'back on track'.
- Leaders and staff provide excellent role models to their pupils. They set high expectations for pupils' social behaviour. They promote tolerance and respect for each other, as well as other people, regardless of faith, sexual orientation, disability or race. They are quick to challenge any discriminatory language or derogatory remarks. Consequently, pupils are pleasant and polite to staff, visitors and each other.
- Leaders develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well through a range of activities and visits to, for example, a range of places of worship and theatres. Pupils are also involved in community ventures, such as the local food bank.
- The school does not receive any additional pupil premium or special educational needs funding from the local authority, nor from schools placing pupils in the school.
- Although the school is registered for pupils up to the age of 17, pupils above the statutory school age who attend the school follow the key stage 4 curriculum. This is because these pupils have significant gaps in their education prior to joining the school.
- Leaders keep up-to-date records and logs of events within the school, including those that record incidents of serious behaviour. These logs record incidents and their outcomes in detail. The headteacher and the proprietary group regularly and effectively evaluate them to identify any emerging trends or reasons for their occurrence.
- The proprietary group has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy pays due regard to the most up-to-date guidance from the Secretary of State and that it is published on the school website.

## **Governance**

- The proprietary group have a shared vision, which is communicated well to all stakeholders. They have made sure they keep a close eye on the work of the school. The proprietary group receives written and verbal reports from the headteacher about different aspects of the school's performance. Furthermore, the proprietary group commissions frequent quality-assurance checks by an independent education consultant to provide further reassurance.
- The proprietary group holds the headteacher to account through a formal performance management process to ensure that she does her job well.
- The proprietary group has ensured that the school's improvement plan is fit for purpose. This plan has helped them to make a success of the school's work regarding attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The proprietary group has made a considerable financial investment to ensure that the school building is suitable, there are sufficient staff to provide the intensive support pupils require and the provision offered meets local needs.

- The proprietary group have the essential skills, experience and expertise with regard to the personal and social needs of the pupils. They have appointed a qualified teacher to help them better meet pupils' academic needs. Moreover, they are in the process of setting up an advisory body to provide professional support and challenge to further improve the school. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of either of these actions.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders carry out rigorous checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children, before they take up their posts. All staff are up to date with their training. The comprehensive training programme makes sure that staff have a good understanding of the risks pupils face. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. They follow up meticulously on any concerns. Good relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel confident to share any worries or concerns. Staff work closely with external partners to signpost pupils and their families to the help and support they may need.
- Every pupil has a risk assessment to make sure that staff put in place strategies to mitigate any potential risks. These are updated following any incidents, both in and out of school. Staff ensure that pupils are given the advice and guidance they need to keep themselves safe, both in the community and online.
- Pupils who spoke with the inspector say that they feel well cared for and safe. They are confident that any incident of bullying would be dealt with effectively by staff.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teachers quickly establish good relationships with pupils. These help pupils overcome their historical distrust of teachers and schools. Pupils are keen to please their teachers so are more willing to 'have a go' at the work set. Teachers make sure that they celebrate pupils' achievements, encouraging them to recognise their successes and which further motivates pupils to work hard.
- The lack of sufficiently detailed curriculum plans means that teachers plan learning which does not take sufficient account of the essential subject knowledge pupils require for each subject. This means that teachers do not make the best use of the limited time that pupils spend at the school to catch up with their academic learning.
- Teachers have not established an effective means of establishing pupils' starting points. Lack of information about their academic attainment and progress prior to joining the school make it challenging for teachers to tailor lessons to pupils' individual needs. They make sure that they are familiar with pupils' education, health and care plans and prioritise these targets in their lesson planning. However, these plans are often out of date.
- At times, pupils find the pace of learning slow and the pitch too low. Teachers make sure that they are well prepared for lessons. They plan learning which usually interests and engages pupils. However, lack of subject-specific expertise for some subjects, such as history, over-reliance on online teaching programmes for English and mathematics and lack of specialist facilities for science mean the quality of teaching is variable.
- Teachers are highly committed to helping every pupil to achieve. Two members of staff

have introduced a GCSE course in art, having recognised some pupils' passion and talent for the subject. They have been well supported by the headteacher, who has secured support for them and pupils from a specialist teacher. The pupils studying this course have quickly built up extensive, high-quality portfolios.

- Teachers prioritise the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. They make sure that younger pupils are helped to fill any gaps in their literacy skills, and that older pupils can gain the necessary qualifications to enable them to secure a place at college, on an apprenticeship or in employment.
- The school provides parents and carers with termly reports so they are kept up to date with how well their child is getting on. These reports make sure that parents can compare their child's attainment and progress over time. In addition, teachers provide daily summaries for each pupil so that parents are well informed about what has gone well for their child and whether there have been any issues. Parents value the wealth of information they receive about their child's personal and academic progress.
- Pupils particularly like personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. Teachers have a wealth of specialist knowledge, which helps them plan lessons that are relevant, interesting and enjoyable. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning in this subject.
- Teachers use questioning well to elicit whether pupils have grasped a concept or remembered key information. They also use questioning effectively to keep pupils focused on their work. This helps pupils to sustain their concentration and complete the work set. Teachers successfully cajole and coax those pupils who find it hard to settle to their work. They make sure that they help these pupils to get into the right frame of mind for learning and avoid disrupting their peers.
- Pupils generally take pride in their work. They act on feedback from their teachers. For example, teachers ensure that pupils consistently apply capital letters and full stops to their writing or adopt suggested strategies to block out distractions.
- Teachers are adept in working alongside pupils during lessons, offering advice and guidance without causing conflict with pupils. Teachers make good use of these opportunities to talk about current learning, reflect on previous learning or talk about aspects of pupils' personal development.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils have a history of educational failure. Many have poor attendance records, negative perceptions of learning and a history of challenging behaviour. For these pupils, Moorfield Learning Centre is their 'last hope'. High-quality pastoral support ensures that these pupils increase the number of sessions they attend, as well as their levels of engagement, and start to build positive relationships with both staff and their classmates.
- Staff are highly skilled in developing strong relationships with pupils, rebuilding their trust in teachers. They help pupils to overcome their negative attitudes to school, so they start to engage in the range of courses on offer at the school.

- Pupils generally get on well together. They are sensitive to each other's individual needs. They speak politely and respectfully to each other, their teachers and visitors.
- Staff get to know pupils well. They put in place tailored support to help pupils settle in well. They make sure that they keep in touch with parents and schools, as well as other professionals, to smooth pupils' transition both into the school and on to their next step.
- Despite pupils' considerable personal challenges, staff encourage them to help other people in need. For the most part, pupils are kind, caring and considerate. For example, in the lead-up to Christmas, pupils have donated items to make up a parcel for the local foodbank in their 'reverse advent calendar'.
- Staff provide pupils with informal and formal advice and guidance about how to keep themselves safe. This programme is complemented by external visitors, such as the local police community-support officer.
- The school encourages pupils to stay healthy. Many pupils did not take part in any physical education activities prior to joining the school. Within a short space of time, pupils join in with badminton and swimming, looking forward to their visits to the local leisure centre. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to suitable showering and changing facilities at the leisure centre.
- Two pupils have been appointed Royal Society for Public Health young health champions for the local area. They work with a multi-agency partnership to make their voice heard in relation to health and well-being issues, as well as helping their peers to develop a healthier lifestyle.
- Pupils take part in the school's programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance. However, a few older pupils are still unsure what their next steps might be. For some this is a reluctance to think about leaving the sanctuary that is this school. Staff help these pupils to identify their skills and talents, so they can start thinking about what they may want to do when they leave school.
- Teachers are highly skilled in developing pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour for learning. However, the school has limited information to assess and track pupils' progress and identify next steps. This means that pupils may not capitalise on their good start by developing higher-level skills, including greater resilience, self-assurance and self-discipline.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils have had long periods of time out of school prior to joining Moorfield. Despite this, all pupils attend school regularly and a high proportion of pupils have 100% attendance. As soon as pupils start at the school, staff support them to build up the number of sessions they attend. Consequently, most pupils significantly increase the number of hours of education they receive within a short space of time.
- Typically, the school is calm and orderly. Staff greet pupils warmly in the morning and check whether they are ready to go into class. Staff are quick to notice when pupils are upset, angry or worried and then make sure that they have the support they need. Pupils take good care of the school building and classroom resources.
- Despite many pupils coming with a history of challenging behaviour, serious incidents are few and far between.

- Pupils report that bullying is rare. Any isolated incidents are dealt with well by staff. Those pupils who might be more vulnerable to bullying because of their sexuality, disability or home circumstances, describe this school as a haven. Pupils appreciate how supportive staff and pupils are here.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- This school succeeds with pupils where other schools have failed. These pupils really do get a 'last chance' when they join Moorfield Learning Centre. All pupils attending the school are disadvantaged by their social, emotional and mental-health needs. They commonly enter the school with considerable gaps in their academic knowledge and understanding, with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age. No pupils have yet completed a full year in the school, but in the short time they have been attending they have made progress from their starting points.
- Despite their histories of educational failure, most pupils improve their attendance and behaviour. These pupils re-engage with education after considerable periods out of school, which for most pupils requires considerable effort and will. For example, those pupils who join the school with disrupted sleep patterns are helped to establish routines essential to getting to school on time, feeling ready for the day.
- From their starting points, pupils make progress both academically and personally. However, pupils do not capitalise on their improved attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning as much as they could. This is because learning is not consistently sufficiently challenging. Moreover, leaders and teachers are not sufficiently clear enough about their curricular intent and its implementation to make sure that sufficient thought is given to the essential knowledge pupils need.
- Lack of subject-specialist teachers, combined with teachers delivering a range of subjects to pupils of differing ages and abilities, hampers pupils' progress. Teachers do not always have enough grasp of the subject to be able to respond quickly to the work pupils produce. Consequently, pupils' progress is variable across the curriculum.
- School leaders have not established a sufficiently robust means of checking on how well pupils are doing. The school's measures of progress against which teachers can benchmark pupils, lack precision. It is difficult to evaluate precisely how well current pupils are doing academically because there is limited evidence of learning, other than a small amount in their books and folders.
- No pupil has completed any externally-accredited qualification in the school because it is too soon after the school opened for them to complete the courses. All pupils work towards recognised qualifications and accreditation. Leaders have ensured that the school's offer meets the diverse needs of pupils in terms of ability, interest and aptitude. Pupils recognise the value of achieving qualifications to helping them gain college places, apprenticeships and employment.
- Most pupils have only been at the school a few weeks. In this short time, current pupils have developed positive attitudes to learning. The school has helped these pupils to have a better understanding about what they would now like to study at college. Consequently, current pupils are refining their subject and accreditation choices to ensure that they will be able to progress on to the course of their choice.



- Current pupils willingly engage in lessons, answering questions, sharing ideas and completing tasks set by their teachers. Pupils' positive attitudes develop over their time at the school and provide a firm foundation for learning.
- Teachers ensure that they identify gaps in younger pupils' learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. This helps these pupils catch up in readiness for reintegrating into mainstream school.
- Pupils achieve well in art. The high quality of work produced by pupils as part of the GCSE art programme is impressive. Other pupils are enjoying working towards their Arts Mark Award.
- All pupils take part in sports activities. Despite some pupils being reluctant to take part in physical activity, they have overcome their negative views, anxieties and fears. Pupils make good use of their weekly badminton and swimming sessions at the local leisure centre. Some pupils have increased the distance they are able to swim, and others have improved their fore- and backhand techniques in squash.

## School details

Unique reference number	145465
DfE registration number	909/6009
Inspection number	10056437

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	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Cascbarrow Limited
Headteacher	Hilary Southward
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,250
Telephone number	01229 837258
Website	<a href="http://www.cascbarrow.co.uk/learning-centre">www.cascbarrow.co.uk/learning-centre</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:moorfieldlearningcentre@gmail.co.uk">moorfieldlearningcentre@gmail.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This was the first inspection of Moorfield Learning Centre. It was first registered by the Department for Education in April 2018 and opened as a school in May 2018.
- The school is located in a refurbished building in Barrow-in-Furness. In addition to the pupils who are on the school's roll, a few pupils, who are dual registered with their mainstream schools or pupil referral unit, attend on short-term and/or part time placements. The school also offers an outreach service to support pupils with social, emotional and mental-health difficulties in local schools.
- The school provides education for pupils aged 11–17 who are at risk of falling, or have fallen, out of education. There are a very small number of students aged over 16 on roll at the school. However, these pupils do not follow the key stage 5 curriculum and are educated alongside pupils in key stage 4.

- All the registered pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have a range of special educational needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, social, emotional and mental health and moderate learning difficulties.
- Places are secured through a referral process involving different agencies, including schools, children's social care and Cumbria local authority. Some pupils come from schools and pupil referral units in Barrow-in-Furness and the surrounding area.
- The school does not use any other alternative providers of education.
- The school organises physical education lessons off site at the local leisure centre.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice to the school.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school. The inspector checked work in a range of pupils' books.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders and directors of the proprietary company, teachers and other adults working in the school. The inspector met with and held telephone conversations with officers of local authority who have placed children in the school.
- The inspector spoke with the independent education consultant who supports the school, local authority officers who work with school and senior leaders from local schools whose pupils attend the school.
- The inspector scrutinised an extensive range of school documentation, including policies, planning, documentation relating to the leadership and management of the school and information about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school. She scrutinised the school's records and systems to check the suitability of adults to work in the school.
- The inspector spoke formally with pupils, as well as informally during the school day and observed them during breaktimes.
- There was one response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. The inspector considered the results of the school's own recent parental surveys.
- The inspector considered the seven written responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector made a thorough tour of the school.

## Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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