

# Youth Challenge PRU

Smithills Dean Road, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 6JT

## Inspection dates

26–27 February 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and staff are passionate about providing the best possible education for pupils and ensure that they are at the heart of all that the school does.
- The belief that leaders and staff have in pupils emboldens them to thrive personally and academically.
- Governors and trustees champion the school. They are experienced and knowledgeable and make a valuable contribution to school improvement and ensuring the best for pupils.
- The strong trusting relationships pupils have with staff, and the outstanding teaching and learning they enjoy, ensure that over time pupils begin to experience educational success. They make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Leaders and teachers know pupils extremely well. The comprehensive assessment system is used precisely to match activities to pupils' learning needs and help them improve and move on in their learning.
- Each pupil is offered a personalised curriculum and targets in English, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development, to maximise their chances of success.
- Pupils' attendance is significantly better than at their previous schools.
- The school provides an exceptional curriculum for key stage 2 pupils. It is interesting and engaging. Key stage 4 pupils are offered opportunities to study a range of subjects that support their future aspirations. This prepares them very well for their next step in education, employment or training.
- Key stage 3 pupils have less opportunity to access subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The excellent enrichment curriculum provides all pupils with opportunities to participate in activities that they would otherwise not experience, and is instrumental in building pupils' confidence, self-belief and resilience.
- Pupils' outstanding personal, social and emotional development is central to the work of the school. Through it, pupils begin to feel positive about themselves and their future.
- Pupils conduct themselves extremely well around school. Where difficulties arise, staff are adept at calming the situation quickly.
- Pupils feel very safe and extremely well looked after in school. They say adults are supportive and understanding. Parents and carers agree.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Broaden the curriculum for key stage 3 pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The leaders, governors and trustees have established a provision which makes a substantial difference to pupils' lives. Youth Challenge Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is an excellent place to learn. Together with the whole staff team, leaders have created an environment which welcomes vulnerable pupils and works highly successfully to remove their barriers to learning.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and what they can achieve. Firm, supportive boundaries help pupils feel secure enough to learn, experience educational success and restore their self-confidence.
- The school actively promotes equality and diversity. Pupils usually mix together well and make a positive contribution to ensuring that the school environment is a calm and considerate place. Pupils learn about and participate in activities within the local and wider community, raise funds for charities and absorb British values, such as tolerance and respecting differences. Pupils develop consideration for others. For example, they are encouraged to be involved in random acts of kindness or to visit a local care home and chat with residents.
- The leadership team are dedicated, experienced and knowledgeable. They accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their reflective, proactive approach is evident in a detailed school evaluation and development plan. This outlines precisely how leaders will address those areas needing further attention.
- The school has developed a comprehensive system to assess pupils' attainment and progress. This provides leaders with a detailed knowledge of pupils' skills and gaps in their learning. It is used to great effect to assess each individual pupil's needs, including those that relate to their personal, social, emotional development, and their behaviour and attendance. The information gathered regularly allows leaders to analyse pupils' holistic progress.
- Key stage 2 pupils typically join the school for one to two terms. All attend for two days and remain registered at their mainstream school for the rest of the week. Key stage 2 leaders offer a high-quality curriculum which pupils find engaging and fun. It focuses on addressing gaps in reading, writing and mathematics skills, as well as an intensive focus on developing pupils' personal, social and emotional skills. Thoughtfully devised topics draw on pupils' interests and incorporate a range of subjects, including history and geography. Pupils explained to inspectors how they loved learning about Viking longships and visiting a museum to find out about the Second World War as part of Remembrance Day.
- Leaders and staff in the secondary phase have developed a thoughtful curriculum tailored to the diverse needs of the pupils it serves. The curriculum for key stages 3 and 4 is focused on what the school refers to as the '3 pillars': English, mathematics, and personal, social and emotional development. The quality of this curriculum is excellent and has a significant impact on pupils' sense of personal and academic achievement. Additionally, all key stage 4 pupils study work skills, and complete related qualifications. This has helped them build their self-confidence and opened them up to

the possibilities and aspirations of future careers. Key stage 4 pupils are encouraged to broaden the subjects they study, whether academic or vocational. If the school does not have the facility to offer an accredited subject, such as science or a modern foreign language, they make every effort to source a local school to facilitate a pupil's choice. Key stage 3 pupils' access to a wider curriculum other than the '3 pillars' is more limited.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through all the school's activities and is a strength. It is mainly delivered through the school's excellent enrichment curriculum, which all pupils talk about with enthusiasm. Pupils experience a wide range of activities including outdoor activities such as horse riding and mountain biking. Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in activities as diverse as managing money and opening a bank account or receiving first-aid training. Pupils also enjoy a range of trips and visits to places such as museums, cities, the countryside, farms and beaches. These opportunities make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- The school does not receive any additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, several pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or are in the process of being assessed for one. The leadership and organisation of provision for pupils with SEND is exemplary, from the identification of pupils' needs to the contribution to EHCP assessment. Parents and carers are particularly complimentary about the work of the school's SEND team to meet their children's educational needs.
- The school receives the pupil premium funding for secondary-age pupils. Leaders use this funding very effectively to reduce the barriers to learning that may be experienced by disadvantaged pupils. Leaders closely monitor and evaluate disadvantaged pupils' progress. This enables these pupils to be successful and to be part of everything the school has to offer.
- The reintegration of pupils back into mainstream schools, or into the next stage of their education, is a strength. The vast majority of pupils in key stage 2 successfully return to primary schools. Key stage 3 and 4 pupils are returned to a mainstream setting wherever possible. Those who do return are predominately successful, remaining for the duration of their school career. Transition arrangements are thorough and thoughtfully carried out. Leaders are extremely mindful of the needs of individual pupils and their families. To this end, they are flexible and adapt reintegration arrangements as needed, to make sure returns to mainstream school are enduring and successful. Where a pupil is better suited to a special school, leaders work extremely well with the local authority and sensitively with parents to ensure that the pupil is placed in the most appropriate provision. The schools which receive pupils are effusive about the quality of support they get from the outreach team. They are also impressed by the improvements in pupils' confidence and attitudes to learning.
- Leaders have an excellent working relationship with both the local authority and local primary and secondary schools. Leaders are influential figures on local school groups and in working with the local authority. They are strong, highly respected advocates for supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties or at risk of exclusion.

## Governance of the school

- The trustees and the local governing body share a wholehearted commitment to improving pupils' academic, social and emotional outcomes.
- Members of the local governing body and trustees use the range of their experience and expertise to good effect. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and provide strong, appropriate challenge to leaders. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's effectiveness and are always seeking ways to improve the school and their own practice.
- Governors know the school well and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. They support the academy lead in holding staff to account.
- Governors are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose. Leaders demonstrate a high degree of expertise and knowledge of all matters relating to safeguarding and welfare.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a safe and secure environment by promoting the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Leaders maintain detailed safeguarding records. Staff, senior leaders and governors undertake regular and appropriate training, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism.
- The school's pastoral support is strong. Senior leaders, liaising with parents, coordinate every aspect of the care offered to vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders are very aware of the high level of vulnerability of the pupils in their care. They are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Good relationships with other agencies and with parents ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Leaders and staff have worked very successfully to ensure that barriers to learning are broken down. Staff share leaders' ambitions and belief in the power of education to transform lives.
- The combination of teachers' knowledge of pupils, their ability to build strong relationships and pupils' self-esteem has ensured that the vast majority of pupils enjoy learning and make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is characterised by friendly, warm relationships between staff and pupils. Staff model and reinforce high expectations for pupils' learning and their behaviour. For example, pupils indicate a clear pride in their well-presented work. Once pupils have settled, they work with purpose and are highly engaged in their learning.

- Teachers and support staff provide pupils with well-prepared, motivating activities, which capture their interest and maximise learning time. Personal, social and emotional development is taught discretely, but is also woven into every aspect of learning, particularly through enrichment activities, such as art, food technology and sport.
- The development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills is a high priority in the school. These subjects, along with personal, social and emotional development, are taught particularly well. They draw on pupils' prior learning and often give real-life, relevant examples to explain what is being taught. For example, when studying modern-day homelessness and poverty, teachers made a link to English and social history by looking at extracts from books by Charles Dickens on Victorian life. This deepened pupils' understanding and gave them an added insight into some of the emotions people may be feeling.
- The information gathered about pupils is detailed and thorough. Teachers are adept in using it precisely to ensure that the tasks are well matched to the individual pupil's ability and learning needs. Consequently, pupils find work to be the right level of challenge to extend them in their learning, without making it daunting. Adults are skilful in maintaining pupils' focus on activities and are quick to pick up if a pupil is beginning to struggle. Pupils who previously felt negative or reluctant to learn are now increasingly displaying a curiosity, and eagerness to improve their work.
- Teachers and support staff's subject knowledge is strong, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers' questioning is highly effective and deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding, offering appropriate challenge to pupils. Pupils are supported to make links between different areas of learning, which deepens their understanding. There are regular opportunities for pupils to talk about their understanding of what they have learned. This is particularly effective in mathematics and personal, social and emotional activities.
- Pupils say they enjoy their learning much more than they used to. This is because teachers make lessons fun and interesting. They also take the time to explain and listen to pupils. Pupils of all ages express a growing confidence in their learning and a resilience to be able to cope when they find something difficult. 'I just stay calm and ask someone to explain it again' was a typical sentiment.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Both are fundamental to the work of the school. Teachers' and other adults' thorough knowledge of pupils and the strong relationships they build with them ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils rebuild their confidence.
- Staff are skilled in developing positive relationships with pupils, many of whom have faced and continue to face great personal challenges. Despite many of the pupils having presented with very challenging behaviour in their previous schools, staff have worked adeptly to help them to settle in to the school quickly and begin to 'turn them around'.

- Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff at the start of each day. Adults model respectful and caring behaviour in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils feel relaxed and begin to enjoy school life.
- The development of pupils' personal, social and emotional skills is considered a 'pillar' of the school's approach. Pupils are offered a highly personalised curriculum based on individual needs and are set personal targets to assess their growing resilience and confidence. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the increasing numbers of pupils who return to mainstream school. The vast majority who return go on to have a successful school career.
- Every effort is made to ensure that secondary pupils make informed decisions about how to pursue their goals for the future. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and to explore their aspirations. The curriculum ensures that pupils develop work-related skills and benefit from an impartial adviser to talk about different career possibilities. Staff successfully prepare pupils by building their self-esteem and social skills. This enables them to engage more effectively in their placements and have an authentic taste of possible future careers.
- Staff actively promote discussions about differences in people and lifestyles. They also encourage conversations about current events, particularly ones that affect pupils. For example, older pupils talk about the effect of knife crime, drug misuse and controlling relationships. Despite the complex needs of pupils, they respond well to this. Where they do not, staff skilfully challenge pupils' attitudes or perceptions. Where there are clashes between pupils, these are managed well by staff.
- Bullying is rare and, if it occurs, is dealt with quickly.
- Parents who spoke with an inspector or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, felt the school had made a big difference to their children. They commented that their child 'felt listened to'. They feel staff not only care deeply about their children, but also the family. They say, 'Nothing is too much trouble.' They felt that communication between home and school was excellent.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Considering the difficulties that pupils have in managing their behaviour, pupils conduct themselves extremely well around school. The school is a calm, orderly place where pupils feel safe and able to learn.
- Movement around the school is carefully and sensitively managed by adults, so there is very limited opportunity for negative situations to arise. Any incidents are rare, and at the same time, adults are mindful of giving pupils space.
- Staff promote consistently high expectations of behaviour, to which pupils respond well. Pupils are increasingly self-regulating their behaviour by stepping away from a situation. Pupils of all ages are confident that there is always a chance to make amends. 'If I mess up, I get a chance to make it right and end up having a good day' was a typical sentiment from pupils from key stage 2 through to key stage 4.
- On the occasions when a pupil is in crisis, staff skilfully deal with the incident, helping them to calm down quickly and rejoin the group. However, pupils are left in no doubt of what is unacceptable behaviour. A very small minority of pupils, whose behaviour

poses a risk to themselves as well as others, are supported through bespoke programmes to better prepare them for learning.

- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and supported to establish a safe learning environment in which pupils conform to high standards of behaviour. Pupils value the support they receive from staff and appreciate their measured and caring approach.
- Behaviour logs are scrupulously maintained and regularly analysed by senior leaders, governors and trustees. This information contributes to leaders' understanding of the progress pupils are making and their readiness for a return to a mainstream school.
- Leaders have established meticulous and effective systems for monitoring absence. They regularly compare individual pupils' attendance with academic progress. This has been particularly important because the majority of pupils who attend Youth Challenge have had poor attendance for much of their previous school careers. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance, and the virtues of regular attendance are regularly promoted. As a result, most pupils' attendance has rapidly improved upon joining the school. Those pupils who still struggle are given effective support to improve their attendance.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Many pupils join the school with attainment below or well below that expected for their age. They often join Youth Challenge having had years of disrupted education and with a profound sense of disengagement from the school system. Their attitudes to learning, attendance and academic achievement all improve rapidly due to the work of Youth Challenge staff. Pupils are making outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Leaders assess pupils when they join the school to establish a full picture of where they are in their learning. Pupils are then set very specific goals around their personal, social and emotional development, their attendance and in English and mathematics.
- Leaders have devised a comprehensive assessment system, which is effective in capturing the individual progress of pupils in the key areas of English, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. It allows leaders to keep a regular check on pupils to ensure that they make sufficient progress against their targets. The ambitious targets set are often exceeded. In response to the rapid progress pupils have made, targets are reviewed very regularly.
- At key stages 2, 3 and 4, in English and mathematics, with starting points below or well below those expected for their age, pupils have closed the gaps in their learning. The school's assessment information and evidence in pupils' books confirm this rapid and sustained progress. For example, pupils' books show they struggled to write full sentences at the beginning of the academic year but are now able to write at length.
- Leaders have recently broadened the key stage 4 curriculum and linked more subjects to awards and accreditation, for example, most recently, in information and communication technology (ICT) and construction. If a key stage 4 pupil arrives with a desire to study, or aptitude for a particular subject not taught at the school to a qualification level, leaders work hard to ensure that pupils are provided with this



opportunity. For example, leaders have sourced a specialist to teach art. Leaders' creation of a package of courses leading to qualifications has raised pupils' self-esteem and confidence in learning.

- There is an expectation that all key stage 4 pupils will achieve a qualification in English, mathematics and preparation for working life. A high proportion of pupils are entered for GCSE qualifications and in 2018 the vast majority of pupils attained GCSE grades A to G. A small number attained an A to C grade.
- There are high expectations for all pupils, including the most able, who are challenged with suitably ambitious learning activities. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils are given every opportunity to catch up with their peers. These two groups of pupils make strong progress over time. Some pupils have an EHCP, for example for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Over time, this group of pupils also make strong progress from their starting points.
- The school provides bespoke careers guidance and works individually with pupils to prepare them for their next stage in education. Every effort is made to facilitate pupils' ambitions by offering them a curriculum and experiences which will support them to achieve their goals. Leaders work successfully drawing on pupils' interests and aspirations to set up work experience placements. They successfully supported the vast majority of pupils to gain appropriate education, employment or training places in 2018.

## School details

Unique reference number	142758
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10092492

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mary Powell
Vice Principal/Academy Lead	Rebecca Leonard
Telephone number	01204 333 872
Website	<a href="http://www.boltonimpacttrust.org.uk">www.boltonimpacttrust.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:leonardr@boltonimpacttrust.org.uk">leonardr@boltonimpacttrust.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Youth Challenge has one main site. In addition, a small group of pupils are taught in a room connected to a local community facility.
- The school caters for key stage 2, 3 and 4 boys and girls who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of exclusion. Key stage 2 pupils are dual-registered with their mainstream school. They attend Youth Challenge for two days a week for approximately 12 weeks. This is as part of a programme agreed between their mainstream school, parents and the local authority.
- Currently, the vast majority of pupils that attend the PRU are from the Bolton area.
- Some pupils have an EHCP. Some pupils are undergoing formal assessment for a plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.

- Youth Challenge PRU does not currently use any alternative providers.
- Youth Challenge PRU became an academy alternative provision converter in April 2016. It is one of five Bolton alternative provisions that form a multi-academy trust. The executive principal of Bolton Impact Trust oversees the five provisions. Youth Challenge PRU is led by the academy lead for secondary, who is also the overall vice-principal for the trust. Youth Challenge PRU is governed by a local governing body which reports to a board of trustees.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in classes. They also observed pupils' behaviour and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They observed pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in books and considered a range of case studies.
- Inspectors held meetings with the academy lead for the secondary phase, the lead for the primary phase and the vice-lead for the secondary phase. They also spoke with members of the pastoral team, curriculum leads. Inspectors also spoke with those responsible for careers, the single central record and attendance.
- The lead inspector met with the executive principal, two members of the local governing body, including the chair, and two representatives of the trustees. She also met with two representatives of the local authority and an independent adviser for secondary.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with some schools used by Youth Challenge.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils around school and to two small groups of key stage 2 and 4 pupils about their opinions of the school and their learning.
- Inspectors took account of 27 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and five responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector also met with two parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered a sample of school policies and other evidence, including minutes from meetings of the local governing body and trustees, information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Inspectors also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nell Banfield

Ofsted Inspector

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