

Inspection of Mill School - Bury

Wellington Street, Bury, Greater Manchester BL8 2BD

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 July 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Mill School told inspectors that they feel safe and happy at school. This is because they feel understood by staff. Pupils thrive in the calm and caring environment that leaders have created. Pupils are eager to learn. They strive to meet the high expectations that leaders have of them. Pupils achieve well. They are supported by dedicated staff who live up to the school's motto of 'motivating individuals for learning and life'.

Over time, pupils learn how to manage their emotions. This helps pupils to behave well and develop positive relationships with others in the school. Bullying is rare. If it occurs, pupils are confident that it would be dealt with quickly.

Pupils enjoy working in the school garden. They appreciate the well-designed spaces where they can be calm and quiet. Pupils talked enthusiastically about visits to museums and performing their own musical compositions. They are proud of their achievements. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility through a range of opportunities. For example, pupils take their roles as members of the school council seriously.

The parents and carers who spoke to inspectors, praised the school highly. The comment, 'It's lovely to see my child smile again,' echoes the views of many.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Before joining the school, many pupils experience an unsettling period in their education. Many have not had any formal education for a sustained period of time. This means that most pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Before joining the school, most pupils struggled to manage their emotions. This hindered their ability to engage with adults and pupils around them, and to learn effectively. Leaders work effectively with pupils, their parents, and other professionals to provide the support and education that matches pupils' individual needs. Pupils' academic, social and emotional needs are clearly identified and linked together well in their individual learning plans.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils to succeed. In most subjects, curriculum plans carefully order the knowledge that leaders want pupils to gain. Pupils practise what they know. This helps them to remember what they have been taught. Teachers check pupils' understanding. This means that teachers can pick up on any misconceptions before they move onto new content. Teachers use assessment information well to plan what pupils need to learn next. This helps pupils to build on their prior learning. However, in a few subjects, it is not as clear what pupils will learn. In these subjects, pupils often struggle to remember what they have been taught.

Well-trained staff have the skills that they need to identify when pupils are becoming anxious and upset. With help, pupils are beginning to understand, and then

manage, their anxiety and emotions. Pupils' behaviour improves over time and any disruptions to learning diminish. This enables pupils to engage effectively in their learning for longer periods of time and this helps pupils to achieve well over time. Pupils develop further strategies to manage their anxiety that will help them as they get older. This prepares them well for their future role in society.

Pupils who are at the early stages of reading are supported well by skilled staff. Pupils join in with familiar stories, songs and rhymes enthusiastically. They practise the sounds that letters represent. The books that they read match the sounds that they know. These strategies help to build pupils' confidence and accuracy when they are reading. Teachers use a range of approaches to aid pupils who struggle to learn new vocabulary. This helps pupils to become increasingly more fluent and competent readers.

Staff promote a love of reading through the carefully chosen books that they read to pupils each day. Pupils across the school enjoy researching information across a broad range of subjects, for example in relation to climate change.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. Staff provide opportunities which promote pupils' understanding and tolerance for the views of others. For example, pupils held a debate about the racist incidents that arose following a recent football tournament. Pupils enjoy experiences which will support them when they live independently. These include reading instructions for washing clothes and budgeting for the purchase of household expenses. Visits from impartial career professionals encourage pupils to be aspirational for the future as engineers, vets or police officers.

Leaders are mindful of staff's workload and staff feel well supported. The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently. Members of the proprietor body use their knowledge and experience effectively to hold leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. The proprietor body ensures that leaders have the resources and the staff that they need to meet pupils' needs well.

The proprietor body has a clear accessibility plan in place. The safeguarding policy is available on the website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive the appropriate training needed to be able to support pupils' needs well. Staff quickly recognise any changes in a pupil's demeanour and understand what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being. Leaders engage positively with other agencies to ensure that pupils have any additional help that they need. This has been increasingly important during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

The broad range of effective strategies used by staff ensure that pupils behave in a safe way towards others and know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Leaders engage positively with parents so that they know how to keep their children safe, including when using the internet at home.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, curriculum plans do not clearly identify the knowledge that leaders want pupils to have. In these subjects, pupils often struggle to remember what they have been taught. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans are carefully sequenced. This will help teachers to plan learning that builds effectively on what pupils already know.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	147349
DfE registration number	351/6017
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10193275
Type of school	Other school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Limited
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Shazia Sarwar-Azim
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,000 to £52,000
Telephone number	01613597788
Website	https://www.kedlestongroup.com/our-schools-homes/day-schools/mill-school-bury/home
Email address	s.sarwar-azim@kedlestongroup.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The referral route for placing pupils at the school is through local authorities in the North West region.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan related to autism spectrum disorder and/or their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- This is the school's first standard inspection since the school opened in April 2020.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and staff, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with two members of the proprietor board. They spoke with the headteacher, members of the leadership team and staff.
- Inspectors had a telephone conversation with a representative from one of the local authorities that places pupils at the school. They also spoke with other professionals who work with pupils in the school, including the occupational therapist. One inspector held a telephone conversation with the speech and language therapist.
- Inspectors considered the following subjects in depth during the inspection: reading; mathematics; personal, social, health and economic education; art and design; science; music and history. They met with some subject leaders on site and held a telephone conversation with one subject leader who was working remotely. Inspectors visited lessons and spoke to staff. They also spoke to pupils about their learning and their experiences of the school. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered the 13 response to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 11 free-text comments. They also met with six parents during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 12 responses to the staff survey and the 11 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Donald

Her Majesty's Inspector

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