

Inspection of Great Howarth School

Great Howarth Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 9HJ

Inspection dates: 30 November–2 December 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff care for and nurture pupils well. The school is a place where pupils, and students in the sixth form, feel safe and well looked after. Staff help pupils to set aside their traumatic former life experiences and start afresh. Adults help pupils to overcome their individual barriers to learning. Pupils and students achieve well personally and academically.

Staff 'value the individual' pupil. Pupils feel at ease with adults, and they enjoy learning with each other. A renewed sense of belonging gives pupils the confidence to enjoy school once again. Inspectors saw happy pupils and students who were engaged in lessons.

Pupils and students are keen to learn. Teachers know pupils well and they make sure that lessons are interesting and fun. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to achieve their very best and they do.

Pupils typically behave well. The pupils that we spoke with told us how their behaviour has improved. Bullying is rare. Adults handle any situations that do arise with behaviour or bullying quickly and with expertise.

Each pupil and student benefits from a personalised plan of support that includes therapy, and communication, vocational and life skills. This helps pupils to be well prepared for the next stages in their education, and for life in modern Britain.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious, including in the sixth form, and that it brings out the best in pupils. They have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn and the order in which to teach topics and concepts. The carefully planned curriculum helps pupils, and students in the sixth form, to experience success both personally and academically.

Pupils have had very negative personal experiences in the past. Some pupils have had considerable gaps in their education before joining this school. Leaders have created a curriculum to address these gaps and repair pupils' faith in learning. Consequently, the curriculum prepares pupils and students well for their futures.

Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. However, some teachers are very new to the school and have not fully got to grips with the new curriculum that they are teaching. On occasion, this prevents them from delivering the curriculum as effectively as they should.

Despite this, teachers have got to know pupils quickly and they plan interesting activities for them. Activities include chances for pupils to learn knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, for example through practical activities. Teachers help pupils to

see connections in their learning. They also make sure that wherever possible pupils can make 'real life' links to the curriculum content. In English, for example, key stage 4 pupils studying Macbeth have also discussed modern day knife crime and gang culture.

Pupils often start at Great Howarth School with poor reading skills. Previously, some pupils have had very little interest in books. Their views of reading and books are quickly transformed. This is because the importance of reading is a prominent feature of school life. Adults inspire a love of reading. Teachers are quick to pick up any pupils that struggle to read. Pupils who are behind in their reading have daily activities to catch up quickly.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many have social, emotional and mental health needs. Teachers successfully meet the range of pupils' additional needs. Pupils and students said that they were now happier, felt better about themselves, and are proud that they are able to learn subjects that will help them in the future.

The trust between pupils and adults helps to ensure that pupils' behaviour is usually good. When pupils struggle with their behaviour, adults expertly calm a situation down. Pupils are keen to come to school.

Pupils and students benefit from a comprehensive personal, social, and economic health curriculum, which includes extensive outdoor activities. This helps pupils to deal with their mental health issues. For example, pupils learn to build dens and cook food on an open fire. Through these activities and more, pupils learn to work as a team, solve problems and build their confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils receive a wide range of appropriate careers information, advice and guidance. This builds over time so that pupils are well prepared, by Year 11, to make informed decisions about their future. Many pupils go on to further education at the local college. Very occasionally, students stay on into key stage 5. They are offered a personalised curriculum. This provides additional support and builds their confidence further. It enables students to have a greater chance of success when they move on to further education.

The building is well maintained, clean and well resourced. There is outdoor space for pupils to get fresh air at breaktimes. The outdoor space and indoor sports hall are suitable for the regular physical education (PE) sessions. Leaders were in the process of refurbishing the changing and shower facilities at the time of the inspection. While this work is being completed, leaders have ensured that pupils and students access PE away from the school building.

Leaders ensure that they follow all health and safety requirements, including fire regulations and risk assessments. Leaders keep carers well informed about the work of the school. Policies, including the school's safeguarding policy, the school prospectus, and the relationships and sex education policy, are available to carers and others. The complaints policy is fully compliant. Leaders have a suitable plan

that describes how pupils with a disability can take part fully in the school's curriculum.

The proprietor body ensures that the independent school standards are met. It has employed educational experts to oversee the work of the schools within the company. These experienced professionals hold regular meetings with the headteacher. They play an effective part in ensuring that leaders are held to account for the quality of education that the school provides.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel they are well supported by leaders and the proprietor body, including with managing their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff act in the best interests of pupils. They are vigilant and quick to follow up any safeguarding concerns.

Leaders keep accurate and well-documented records of any safeguarding issues. Staff take part in regular training to keep pupils' welfare and safety at the forefront of their work.

Leaders work well with other agencies and therapists to support pupils. Pupils learn how to stay safe and behave responsibly in different situations, particularly when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Recent changes in staffing have resulted in a small number of new teachers joining the school. They are not as confident as they could be in their knowledge of the subject curriculum that they are delivering. Sometimes, this prevents them from delivering subject content as effectively as they should. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers have training in the expectations of the new curriculum as quickly as possible.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	135753
DfE registration number	354/6035
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10210874
Type of school	Independent school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	2
Proprietor	Horizon Care and Education Group Limited
Chair	Paula Keys
Headteacher	Tracy Porter
Annual fees (day pupils)	£69,000 to £100,000
Telephone number	01706 631804
Website	www.horizoncare.co.uk
Email address	tracy.porter@horizoncare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 to 5 July 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of staffing changes. The new headteacher took up post in September 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the curriculum leader and the head of pastoral support. Inspectors also spoke to staff focusing on leaders' safeguarding arrangements.
- An inspector spoke with the representative of the proprietor body, the operations director, the education managing director and the school's improvement adviser.
- An inspector also spoke to a representative of a local authority who places pupils at the school, and a key worker from a care home where a pupil resides.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to the independent school standards, the curriculum, school improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and spoke to members of staff about their well-being and workload.
- There were no responses to the pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke with some pupils about their work and school life.
- Inspectors looked in detail at English, mathematics, science and art and design. For each of these subjects, inspectors held discussions with leaders and teachers, visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and talked to pupils. Inspectors also considered other subjects across the curriculum.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Adam Sproston

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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