

Inspection of Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School

Glen Road, Waterfoot, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 7BJ

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected six years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils at this school, including students in the sixth form, are articulate, conscientious and highly motivated to achieve well. However, numerous pupils and students told inspectors that they feel worried, unhappy and unsafe. This is because incidents of harmful sexual behaviour go unchallenged or are dismissed by leaders.

Many pupils have lost confidence in the ability of leaders and staff to protect them from harm. This is a view echoed by a number of parents and carers who also expressed concerns to inspectors about their children's well-being and safety while in school.

Many pupils feel that there is not an adult in school to whom they can talk if they need to seek help. Leaders often do not make referrals to the local authority when appropriate. Pupils and students told inspectors that some teachers either 'do not care' about their worries or they simply 'brush them under the carpet'. This is particularly the case for some pupils and students who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

In lieu of adequate support, some pupils and students said that they felt the need to take matters into their own hands to try to resolve issues, particularly in relation to harmful sexual behaviours. They also described how they, and their peers, are sometimes the target of abuse because they are different to others. Many pupils and students told inspectors that teachers do not deal with incidents of bullying effectively. Some told inspectors that they had experienced, and continue to endure, frequent and unwanted harmful sexual behaviour.

Pupils and students know that leaders have high expectations of what they can achieve. These high expectations are reflected in the way that pupils and students behave during lessons. Lessons are seldom disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils and students progress well through subject curriculums. They recall their prior learning with confidence.

There is a range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer for pupils and students, such as the debating society, music clubs, basketball and football. However, nearly one half of the pupils and students on roll do not make the best use of these clubs.

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

Leaders have created a well-structured academic curriculum. Most subject curriculums are appropriately ambitious for pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very high proportion of pupils in key stage 4 study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Students in the sixth form choose from a wide range of appropriate A-level qualifications. Across the school, most pupils and students achieve well. Parents and carers value the academic education provided by the school.

Following the disruption caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have carefully identified the learning that pupils and students may have missed or forgotten. They have adjusted and adapted subject curriculums appropriately to ensure that pupils can revisit important content. Leaders have organised curriculums so that pupils and students can build new learning securely on what they already know and can do.

Subject leaders have built in a range of opportunities to check on how well pupils and students are learning the content of the curriculum. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from regular checks on their learning to help them to know what they need to work on next. For the most part, teachers use the agreed assessment systems skilfully to identify and address pupils' and students' misconceptions. At times, however, teachers do not use assessment strategies, including questioning, well enough to find out what pupils already know so that new learning builds closely on what pupils have retained from their earlier lessons. Leaders are taking steps to address this issue.

Leaders work together with other professionals and external agencies to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders ensure that teachers have the information that they need to support this group of pupils with their learning. For example, staff work closely with feeder primary schools and parents of pupils and students with SEND who are joining the school, to ensure that their needs are met effectively. Mostly, pupils and students with SEND achieve well.

Pupils enjoy reading. They are enthusiastic about their favourite authors and keen to expand their horizons by reading a range of texts. There are a small number of younger pupils who struggle with reading. These pupils receive effective support from staff to ensure that they can develop further their reading knowledge and improve their fluency. This successfully enables these pupils to access the full curriculum.

During lessons, pupils concentrate closely on their learning. This means that teachers focus predominantly on using their extensive subject-specific expertise to deliver curriculums with clarity. However, at social times and when relating to each other, many pupils show a lack of respect to their peers, through bullying, discrimination and intolerance of difference.

Pupils, and particularly students in the sixth form, have not been able to benefit from a suitable and age-appropriate personal development curriculum. For instance, pupils and students have not learned enough about the features of healthy and respectful relationships, consent and what constitutes harmful sexual behaviour. In addition, pupils and students have not learned enough about the damage caused by discriminatory language and stereotypes. As a result, many pupils and students show a lack of respect for their peers. Some pupils and students do not understand that everyone is unique, and all are equal and that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their difference. These pupils and students are ill-prepared to take up their roles as responsible citizens in a modern Britain.

Leaders, including members of the governing body, are aware of the extent of problems relating to incidents of harmful sexual behaviour in the school. However, they are not doing enough to deal with these endemic weaknesses effectively. Members of the governing body do not provide an appropriate level of challenge to senior leaders. Added to this, those responsible for governance do not fulfil all of their statutory duties, for example in relation to safeguarding and the Equality Act 2010. Governors have also failed to consult with parents on the school's relationships and sex education and health education policy in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance requirements.

Staff underestimate the frequency of incidents of harmful sexual behaviour. They have an overly positive view of pupils' and students' lived experiences in the school. For example, the vast majority of staff are of the view that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. This is because they are not aware that pupils are reluctant to report their concerns due to the dismissive culture in school.

Leaders have designed a suitable programme for pupils, including students in the sixth form, to learn about prospective careers. For example, there are opportunities for pupils and students to benefit from relevant work experience. More recently, leaders have ensured that pupils and students can learn more readily about apprenticeships and other high-level technical qualifications on offer. As a result, pupils and students are more informed about these as possible options for their next steps, including apprenticeships.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders, including governors, have failed to foster an effective culture of safeguarding.

Some leaders, including members of the governing body, are not fully aware of the statutory guidance relating to the safeguarding of pupils. Some leaders' safeguarding training is not up to date. Added to this, leaders' records to check that staff are suitable to work at the school were incomplete and had to be resolved during the inspection.

Leaders' systems to report and manage safeguarding concerns about pupils and students are disjointed. Leaders have not ensured that staff know and understand how to use the different systems to report safeguarding concerns. This confuses some staff.

Widespread weaknesses in leaders' systems to identify vulnerable pupils mean that some pupils and students are at serious risk of harm.

Leaders do not respond to safeguarding concerns in a timely manner. Nor do they analyse the full range of information that they hold to spot concerns and take action to prevent subsequent incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including harmful sexual

behaviour. For instance, school records showed a number of cases related to sexual harassment, such as inappropriate touching, where leaders had not responded appropriately to prevent these behaviours from escalating or happening again. In addition, there were times when pupils and/or staff had reported safeguarding incidents and leaders had not made referrals to appropriate external agencies, including the local authority safeguarding hub. During the inspection, inspectors made a safeguarding referral to the local authority and raised concerns about wider safeguarding issues.

Many pupils who have suffered harm are not adequately supported. They do not receive timely or appropriate help. For example, school records show that some pupils have been subjected to discriminatory or harmful sexual behaviour for a prolonged period of time. Leaders had not dealt with this effectively. They did not ensure that the victims or the perpetrators always received appropriate help. When support is provided, leaders do not check that the problems have been resolved.

Leaders and staff do not keep pupils and students safe from bullying, discriminatory language and the harmful sexual behaviour of others. Many pupils and students have lost faith in leaders' ability to protect them from such incidents. There is a lack of trust. Consequently, many pupils and students said that they are reluctant to report or have simply given up reporting personal problems and safeguarding concerns. These pupils do not believe that leaders and/or staff will take their concerns seriously, protect their anonymity or act with discretion to stop harmful behaviour and prevent it reoccurring. Leaders have failed to address the root causes of an unsafe and dismissive culture in which racism, homophobia and misogyny appear to be accepted.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and students are effective. They have not ensured that all staff are clear on which system to use to report concerns. They have not acted with urgency, tenacity or effectively to keep pupils safe from bullying and harmful sexual behaviours. They have not ensured that pupils receive the help that they should following such incidents. As a result, many pupils and students do not feel safe and do not have confidence or trust in leaders' actions to keep them safe. Leaders must take immediate action to ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding, where all leaders, staff and governors have the knowledge and skills to ensure that all concerns are dealt with swiftly and appropriately in order to keep pupils safe and enable them to feel safe.
- Leaders are not taking effective steps to secure respectful behaviour from pupils. Leaders and governors have failed to create a culture in which difference, for example in relation to race and sexual orientation, is respected and valued. As a result, many pupils and students use harmful name-calling without any understanding of its damaging effects. Many pupils and students do not treat each other respectfully. These pupils are ill-prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders must ensure that staff are appropriately trained to promote pupils' understanding of the diverse society, so that they appreciate difference and treat their peers with respect and tolerance, thereby eradicating a school culture that leaves many pupils feeling unsafe.

- The personal development programme, including the programme for teaching relationships and sex education and health education, does not equip pupils and students with sufficient understanding of healthy and trusting relationships, including consent. This leads to incidents of harmful sexual behaviour becoming the norm and an accepted feature of school life. Leaders must ensure that an appropriate personal development and relationships and sex education and health education curriculum is implemented urgently, including in the sixth form, and that all staff have the skills and confidence to teach this curriculum and pupils are better prepared for how they treat others in school and in their future lives.
- Members of the governing body do not hold leaders to account effectively, particularly relating to issues around safeguarding, pupils' and students' behaviour and attitudes and pupils' and students' personal development. Governors do not fulfil all of their statutory duties. This has resulted in a climate where many pupils do not feel that they are safe in school. Governors should ensure that they are sufficiently knowledgeable to provide an acceptable level of challenge to leaders for all aspects of the school's work.

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138835
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10199500
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1284
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Malcolm White
Headteacher	Alan Porteous
Website	www.brgs.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 January 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- This school is a single academy trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspectors deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is

failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Having considered the evidence, the inspectors strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, English, science, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils, students and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work. Inspectors also spoke to curriculum leaders and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work from other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and four other governors. Inspectors also considered the minutes of several governors' meetings.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, staff, students and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupils' and students' behaviour, leaders' improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation.
- Inspectors observed pupils' and students' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke with pupils and students about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and students about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey.

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