



Brownhill School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105861
LEA Rochdale
Inspection number 277429
Inspection dates 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Susan Preece HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Heights Lane
School category	Community special		Rochdale
Age range of pupils	7 to 16		Lancashire OL12 0PZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 648990
Number on roll	49	Fax number	01706 648537
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Tracey Richards
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr Patrick Ottley-O'Connor

Age group 7 to 16	Inspection dates 21 June 2006 - 22 June 2006	Inspection number 277429
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Brownhill School is a 70-place special school for pupils who experience emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. There are currently 49 pupils on roll, although only 32 pupils are expected to attend on site; there are 28 boys and four girls. The majority are in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. All the pupils have a statement of special educational need and many have additional educational or medical needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is 59%. Two pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Two of the pupils are in public care.

Brownhill School has suffered from considerable turbulence in recent times. Over a period of four years the school has had a succession of eight headteachers, three of whom have held the post this academic year. Rochdale Local Authority closed the school temporarily in September 2005, under section 62 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, on the grounds that the school was not providing an adequate education and safe environment for its pupils. Since re-opening in October 2005, there have been two acting headteachers. The most recent, in post since January 2006, is seconded from a local comprehensive school until the end of the summer term 2006. An experienced consultant is working with the school and she will take up the headship from September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the pupils' achievement and attendance.

This school is improving but inspectors judge overall effectiveness to be inadequate despite these efforts. Irregular attendance, and the legacy of poor provision in the recent

past, means that pupils' overall achievement is unsatisfactory.

The school was identified by the local authority as a cause for concern in the summer term 2004 and has been receiving monitoring visits and intensive support since that time. Since then, the strong leadership provided by the acting headteacher and the new

senior management team, combined with careful monitoring, has led to marked improvements, particularly in the quality of teaching and the pupils' behaviour. Teaching

is now satisfactory overall although more needs to be good if pupils are make up ground

lost earlier in their learning. A remaining weakness in teaching is the inconsistent use of

assessment data to set learning targets for pupils and to measure their progress towards them. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are also satisfactory. The pupils' behaviour in and around the school is generally good but their attendance, although improving, remains poor. This is another principal reason for the slow progress made by pupils over time. The curriculum is satisfactory. Overall, the leadership and management of the school have already demonstrated that the school has the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

Improve the achievement of pupils through:

- better and more regular attendance
- setting measurable and rigorous learning targets to identify more clearly the progress that pupils need to make and ensure that their progress is monitored regularly

- sharing the good practice that exists in teaching and learning with all staff so that more teaching is routinely good.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Most pupils arrive at the school with a history of disrupted schooling, poor behaviour and standards of attainment that are well below those expected for their age. This, combined with past leadership difficulties, weaknesses in provision, and inadequate pupil attendance, has resulted in too few pupils attaining the standards of which they are capable.

The recent introduction of new arrangements for managing behaviour, including the setting of personal behavioural targets and reward systems, are good. These have transformed the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, better behaviour and success in learning are developing the pupils' self-esteem and helping them take pride in their work; the BIG slogan, 'Brownhill is great', is displayed around the school and is a source of pride among pupils and staff alike. Consequently, a positive climate for learning has been established and this is reinforced through frequent celebration of pupils' progress and achievements, including through well run assemblies.

This year there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils being entered for national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and for external examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. The range of accreditation is now growing and this motivates pupils. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills remain underdeveloped and are a barrier to learning in some lessons.

Accurate information about the pupils' prior attainment is not always readily available and this makes it difficult for the school to identify how well each pupil could achieve. Recently introduced assessment systems are beginning to successfully identify more precisely the ability levels of each pupil. This work needs further development as it does not yet extend to setting precise and measurable learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that this is satisfactory. Pupils who attend regularly enjoy school, particularly in those good lessons when they are motivated and challenged to learn. Although some pupils find it hard, they understand class and school rules and make a big effort to meet their daily behavioural targets. As a result, the pupils' behaviour during the inspection was generally good, in and out of lessons, and this is a fruit of the good relationships

that exist between staff and pupils. Most pupils have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong. A school council has been formed; this allows pupils to have a say in identifying what could be improved in school and helps instil a sense of responsibility. Pupils feel that the school is now a much calmer and safer place than it used to be in the past. Older pupils have requested training as peer mentors so that

they can help others and this is a reflection of the caring ethos that is becoming established. Older pupils also are helped to learn about working life and develop economic awareness through work experience.

Pupils recently produced a music CD and DVD about positive attitudes to the school and their life in general. They are rightly very proud of this work and it has helped to increase their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils develop inter-personal and social skills through the involvement with local art and drama projects, such as

'Starlight Circus' and Rap BIG production. This reflects the improving spiritual and cultural ethos, which is being developed within the school community. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school has worked hard to raise attendance, and most pupils have improved their rate of attendance during the course of the school year, but it is still not good enough. The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen significantly since January 2006.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall; it is sometimes good. Regular monitoring has highlighted aspects of teaching which should be improved, and training and guidance have been provided. The school has a realistic view of the quality of its teaching and learning. The staff have worked hard to develop effective approaches to managing behaviour, particularly through setting behavioural targets, and this has resulted in an improved climate for teaching and learning, although the day-to-day use of learning targets is not as well developed. In the better lessons, pupils make good progress because teaching meets pupils' needs and builds motivation by encouraging short-term successes, and helps them work independently. Pupils knew what they were expected to learn and teachers checked their progress at the end of the lesson; in one lesson pupils were given the opportunity to assess their own progress and were able to see what they needed to do to improve further. This practice is not spread widely enough across the school.

Assessment, although improving, does not always adequately identify the starting ability levels of each pupil. This makes the planning of lessons, to help pupils overcome gaps in their understanding and learning, unnecessarily difficult. In the weaker lessons, pupils were reluctant to undertake tasks where they could not see the relevance of the activities. There has been substantial investment in information and communication technology, including in interactive whiteboards, and these are used well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Statutory requirements are now met, including those for religious education. Assemblies occur regularly and celebrate the successes of individuals and the school. Pupils participate, enjoy and achieve well in sport. There

is a growing enrichment programme with pupils playing football and basket ball with other schools and a summer residential activity is being planned. The recently extended range of accreditation at Key Stage 4 should provide pupils with an increased level of challenge and the opportunity to gain a range of qualifications when they leave school. More time is given to practical subjects and this helps capture pupils' interest and encourage them to attend more regularly. Suitable opportunities are provided for the pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 to attend local colleges, as and when appropriate. The school is currently reviewing the curriculum and plans are well under way to introduce a more alternative and therapeutic model and the return of a nurture group. Equality of opportunity is adequate overall but there is insufficient focus on the exploration and celebration of different cultures within the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the quality of care provided for pupils is satisfactory. All pupils are treated with respect and dignity. Staff know pupils' personal histories well and make good use of this information to support them in what are often difficult circumstances. Staff try hard to involve parents and carers in their child's education. Child-protection requirements are met and health-and-safety procedures are, in the main, understood by all staff. The personal, social and health education programme contributes well to the pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy and safe lifestyles and provides adequate sex education. In particular, this helps raise pupils' awareness of the harmful effects of drugs misuse and the importance of healthy eating. Individual pupils' needs are met flexibly. For example, pupils with a long-term history of school refusal are encouraged to attend

school on a part-time basis, leading to a graduated return. However, monitoring of external provision, for example when pupils are taught at home, is not always frequent or detailed enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Inspectors agree with the school, that despite its troubles, it is emerging strongly from a very fragile state. The acting headteacher has established a real sense of purpose and the school is making good progress towards realising his vision. Overall, a calm and purposeful atmosphere permeates the school day and staff share the vision for creating a 'nurturing' environment which develops the whole pupil and this is being translated into practice. There are now high expectations of behaviour and achievement, both of which are celebrated frequently. Staff and pupil morale have improved and there is belief in the school's leadership at all levels. The senior leadership team is relatively new and a model of devolved subject leadership is developing well. Most teachers have previously only managed themselves but many are now managing a department

of two or more teachers. This is being done well in the majority of subjects, particularly in mathematics and science.

Governors and staff have a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas in need of further improvement. Systems have been introduced to monitor, evaluate and improve performance, although weaknesses inherent in the way the school sets and checks on individual learning targets for pupils mean that this remains an area for development. Rightly, this has been identified by the school as a priority. Policies and practices, that lapsed previously, have been addressed so that improvements can be maintained and built on regardless of any future staff changes. The local authority has provided good support for the school; the senior school improvement manager has been pivotal in co-ordinating the support of the authority's consultants as well as providing guidance and support for the acting headteacher.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	No
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us earlier this week and giving your time to tell us about your school. We were very impressed with your music CD and DVD and wish you lots of success with your performance next week in the Rochdale Festival, which is being performed at the Gracie Fields Theatre.

These are the main findings from the inspection. I agree with you that the school is now a safer place to be and most of you take responsibility for your own safety and that of others around you. The staff support you well throughout the school day. There have been improvements in the range of programmes and examinations open to you. I know you are looking forward to the skills you will be able to develop with the new courses you will soon be able to take.

Attendance across the school could be higher and I would encourage you to try to meet your personal targets, not only in behaviour but in learning. Your behaviour around school is generally good and most of you are keen to learn and do your best. The teaching has recently improved. The new headteacher manages the school very well and you appreciate that he and the staff listen to your views. Staff are working hard to help you to achieve.

In order to improve further the school should put into place the following:

- better and more regular attendance
- setting targets for your learning and checking this regularly
- share the good practice that exists in teaching and learning with all staff.

Once again, thank you for your support with this inspection. You and your staff can be proud of what you have achieved and I wish you every success for the future.