

# Bright Futures School for Children with Autism

Oberlin Cottage, Oberlin Street, Greenacres, Oldham OL4 3HS

## Inspection dates

11–13 December 2018

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b> |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Good</b> |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Good</b> |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Good</b> |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Good</b> |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders successfully provide pupils with an environment where they grow in confidence and substantially improve their attitudes to learning.
- Staff know their pupils well and provide for their social and emotional needs very effectively.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- From typically low starting points, pupils make strong progress across most subjects, including English and mathematics. Staff make sure that pupils are ready for the next stage of their education or training.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff typically plan lessons that provide pupils with the right degree of demanding work.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know that they can trust adults to help them if they have any worries.
- Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe when they are online. They also give them important messages about the dangers of drugs.
- Leaders have improved the range of qualifications that pupils can achieve by the time they reach Year 11. The curriculum is broad and meets pupils' needs and interests effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils who displayed poor behaviour before arriving at the school improve substantially in their time at Bright Futures School.
- The proprietor has a secure overview of standards in the school and firmly holds the headteacher to account.
- Occasionally, in mathematics, teachers do not show pupils ways to avoid errors in calculation.
- Pupils' progress in physical and creative subjects is not as strong as in other subjects.
- Pupils do not have a fully developed understanding about the characteristics of different faiths and beliefs.
- Leaders' plans for school improvement do not focus sufficiently on the intended impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Further improve pupils' progress in mathematics, by ensuring that staff more consistently teach methods of calculation that reduce the potential for errors.
- Ensure that leaders strengthen pupils' progress in physical and creative subjects, by ensuring that the knowledge, understanding and skills that they are to acquire follow a clear and cumulative sequence.
- Make sure that pupils have a more secure knowledge of different religions to enhance their respect for the beliefs and faiths of others.
- Ensure that, in devising action plans for school improvement, leaders have a sharper focus on the intended impact of their actions on pupils' achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor and the headteacher are completely committed to providing the highest possible standard of care and education for pupils at the school. The proprietor and the headteacher are knowledgeable and dynamic. They have sustained and, in some respects, improved the quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Because of their work, pupils make good progress from their typically low starting points.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders identify areas for improvement effectively and devise suitable action plans. Sometimes, however, they are not clear about how they will measure the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which is effective in meeting pupils' needs. It reflects the school's ethos to maximise the potential of pupils, who come to the school with high levels of anxiety that are related to their needs. Leaders focus successfully on developing pupils emotionally and socially, so that pupils may go on to learn key skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders also provide a wide range of other subjects that meet the expectations of the independent school standards. There are clear plans and schemes of work that carefully sequence pupils' learning to ensure that they acquire knowledge effectively. However, in physical and creative aspects of the curriculum, the sequencing is less precise.
- There is a broad range of other activities that enhances pupils' learning and effectively supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include visits to a local fire station and to a recycling centre. Leaders also promote pupils' good health with a programme of physical activities, including swimming, cycling and horse-riding.
- Leaders provide a range of activities and lessons to foster a strong understanding of British values and equalities. Pupils are clear about the importance of respect for others, regardless of their characteristics. Activities, such as opportunities to meet the local mayor, help to reinforce pupils' understanding of democracy.
- Leaders use the funding they receive to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with considerable effectiveness. All staff know their pupils very well and regularly have professional discussions with leaders to ensure that they continuously meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils in the school make strong progress from their starting points, particularly in their emotional and behavioural development. They are thus well equipped when they come to the next step in their educational journey.
- The lead inspector spoke with parents of half of the pupils in the school. All had positive things to say about the work of the school, with some being fulsome in their praise of the care that staff provide. Typically, parents said that the school is 'amazing' and that their children had been inspired to engage with learning more enthusiastically as their confidence increased.
- Staff appreciate the training that leaders provide and feel that it makes them more effective practitioners. They said that leaders value their opinions and some commented

that they feel proud to work at the school. Recent innovations, such as regularly scheduled planning time, have helped staff to manage their workload more effectively.

- There is a suitable careers programme in place. Leaders provide a range of work experiences that match pupils' interests and strengths. These range from work in a pet shop to work at a local reservoir, which contributes well to pupils' understanding of environmental issues.
- Leaders have responded promptly to the findings of an external review of their practice. For example, they have rearranged the school's timetable so that pupils have more opportunities to work independently, researching for themselves issues such as healthy and unhealthy food.
- Leaders carry out thorough checks on the quality of teaching and learning, through activities such as observing lessons and analysing pupils' work. The headteacher meets with staff frequently to share strengths and areas for development. These activities contribute effectively to the good standard of teaching and learning evident in the school.
- Leaders have successfully addressed the area for improvement identified at the last inspection concerning the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. These subjects now have a more prominent place in the timetable. There is also an extra session each day to develop pupils' reading skills. The area for improvement for 16 to 19 provision does not apply because the school no longer caters for students in this age range.

## **Governance**

- There are no school governors. The proprietor, who is also the head of development, has a secure overview of the quality of education. Because of her operational role, which focuses on pupils' emotional and social development, she has a good grasp of the day-to-day running of the school. She holds the headteacher to account effectively. She meets with the headteacher, known as the head of learning, every month to discuss pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. The proprietor's vision and actions contribute significantly to the good quality of education that the school provides.
- Although the school provides a far wider range of qualifications than at the previous inspection, the proprietor is ambitious for further development. Leaders have devised plans to appoint specialist teachers of English and mathematics to teach at a higher level of achievement.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy, which leaders publish on the school's website.
- The designated lead for safeguarding keeps detailed records of concerns and responds promptly, making referrals to outside agencies when required.
- Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and the signs of abuse. They also have an in-depth understanding of their pupils' needs. This ensures that they are particularly alert to any changes in mood or behaviour that might indicate a concern.

- Leaders carry out a detailed risk assessment for each pupil. This analyses the pupil's learning needs. For example, it indicates how staff should respond if a pupil shows particular behaviour patterns. There are also daily meetings to ensure that all members of staff are aware of any emerging issues. These processes ensure that pupils are safe and that staff meet their needs effectively, contributing significantly to the very strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that staff teach them how to stay safe. For example, they know how to be safe when using the internet and they are aware of the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- The school's necessary record of checks on members of staff is detailed and complies with the government's guidance.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Staff use their range of knowledge and skills to ensure that pupils are in the right frame of mind to learn. Staff support pupils very effectively in managing the social and emotional difficulties that pupils experience, which are characteristic of autism spectrum disorder. Consequently, pupils develop greatly improved attitudes to learning during their time at the school. This enables them to access the curriculum with considerable success.
- Staff use assessment effectively to address pupils' misconceptions and to plan the next steps in their learning. For example, in English in key stage 3, staff checked how much pupils knew about how to punctuate direct speech. This enabled staff to sequence the learning effectively for the next lesson.
- Typically, staff plan lessons that are well matched to pupils' needs and capabilities. Staff use their mainly strong subject knowledge to inform these lessons. This enables pupils to make good progress across a wide range of subjects. On occasion, however, in mathematics, teachers do not meet pupils' needs fully. This is because they do not sufficiently reduce pupils' potential for making errors in calculations.
- Behaviour management strategies are effective. Pupils show typically excellent conduct because staff have high expectations of them. Staff also expect pupils to complete work to a high standard, taking into consideration their needs and abilities. The majority of pupils show pride in their work through neat presentation.
- Staff give careful thought to arranging the learning environment to support the needs of the pupils. For example, they provide screened areas in which pupils may work if their autism spectrum disorder prevents them concentrating. Staff also use displays to reinforce pupils' interests and strengths and develop their self-esteem. These approaches make a helpful contribution to securing pupils' strong progress.
- Evidence from pupils' work shows that teachers provide opportunities for pupils to make use of the skills that they learn in English and mathematics in other subjects. For example, in science in key stage 2 and key stage 3, pupils write reports about an investigation into breathing. They also use their mathematical knowledge to record heart rates before and after exercise.

- Staff provide useful information to parents and carers to keep them informed of their children's progress. Staff communicate daily through a home-school book and provide parents with detailed annual reports about pupils' progress and development.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders provide a wide range of activities, such as educational visits to museums, that contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils learn about equalities effectively through, for example, the school's programme of personal, social, health and economic education. They understand the importance of respect for all people, including those who have protected characteristics, such as race or disability. Although pupils are aware that people have a range of faiths and beliefs, they have a less well developed understanding of the different features of those faiths.
- Pupils learn about responsibility, independence and good citizenship in a number of ways. For example, staff expect pupils to carry out 'domestic jobs' around school, such as tidying up or emptying wastepaper bins. Staff also encourage pupils to raise money for charity by taking part in activities outside school, such as bag-packing in a local supermarket. On school open days, pupils have the opportunity to act as guides to welcome visitors and show them around the school.
- Parents are happy about their children's development and welfare. Pupils trust staff to look after them and know that they can talk to them if they have any worries.
- There are no examples of bullying in school. Pupils show good relationships with each other, allowing for their needs. There are also warm and supportive relationships between adults and pupils.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have effective careers guidance and advice. Leaders provide information about a wide range of possible careers, including occupational and educational paths. Leaders currently encourage pupils to achieve as highly as they can, preparing some for more academic qualifications after they leave school to progress to college.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils typically come to the school with a history of behaviour issues in their previous schools. Pupils' behaviour improves dramatically once they are at Bright Futures School. The large majority of pupils behave impeccably. A few pupils with more severe behavioural needs show sustained improvement after their arrival.
- Staff have highly effective behaviour management strategies. They address, with great success, the infrequent examples of poor behaviour, which are usually caused by pupils' needs.
- Pupils usually arrive at the school after poor attendance at their former schools. Their attendance improves markedly once they start, with some pupils achieving full attendance

very quickly. Parents made it clear that staff are very effective at engaging pupils in their learning and making school a welcoming and inviting place to be.

- The school is very orderly environment and pupils are polite and considerate. Given their needs, the large majority show excellent self-discipline.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils who attend Bright Futures School join in various year groups. They all have an education, health and care plan and have diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder. They have typically been unable to make progress at their previous school and have reached a point where they preferred not to attend. After they arrive at Bright Futures, they settle very quickly into their new surroundings. Staff analyse and meet pupils' needs so well that absence ceases to be a problem. Pupils make good progress in their social and emotional development. They also develop much stronger communication skills, including improved recognition of non-verbal communication, which many initially find difficult.
- Case studies and samples of work show that almost all current pupils progress strongly in a wide range of subjects from their low starting points. These include English and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in physical and creative aspects of the curriculum is less strong. Staff prepare pupils effectively for the next stage of their development, as all pupils leave Year 11 to go on to employment, education or training. They usually attend one of a few local colleges.
- Leaders provide a range of ASDAN qualifications that enable pupils to make good progress in their personal development. Since the last inspection, leaders have introduced a wider range of accreditations, including short courses in literacy, numeracy, animal care and employability skills. By Year 11, all pupils usually gain some level of English or mathematics ASDAN accreditation. Some now have the opportunity to sit tests in functional skills in these subjects.
- Leaders do not currently provide more ambitious qualifications, such as entry level or GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. Part of their current development plan is to register as a centre for pupils, depending on their aptitude, to sit such examinations when the school moves into new premises next year. Leaders have included actions in this plan to recruit specialist teachers to teach English and mathematics.
- Given their predominantly low ability, pupils use their reading skills well to support their learning. For example, during the inspection, pupils in key stage 3 read with appropriate fluency to evaluate each other's writing of a newspaper report. Leaders have also given extra prominence to reading in recent months, as they have timetabled dedicated reading time every day for all pupils. Younger pupils acquire basic phonics knowledge successfully, which supports their progress in reading. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress in reading.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 105748   |
| DfE registration number | 353/6015 |
| Inspection number       | 10086947 |

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

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school                      | Other independent special school   |
| School category                     | Independent school   |
| Age range of pupils                 | 5 to 16  |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 12   |
| Number of part-time pupils          | 0  |
| Proprietor                          | Zoe Thompson   |
| Headteacher                         | Alison Hughes  |
| Annual fees (day pupils)            | £33,600 to £49,500   |
| Telephone number                    | 01457 878738   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.brightfutureschool.co.uk">www.brightfutureschool.co.uk</a>       |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:office@brightfutureschool.co.uk">office@brightfutureschool.co.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | 8–10 November 2016   |

## Information about this school

- Bright Futures School is situated near Oldham.
- The proprietor is also the school's head of development. The headteacher is known in the school as the head of learning. The head of development and head of learning are the school's senior leaders.
- The school is registered to admit 12 pupils aged from five to 18 years. The school has requested a change of age range to five to 16 years. The school has also requested short-term arrangements for pupils to stay longer at the school in exceptional circumstances. All of the above is the subject of a separate material change inspection report.

- The school caters for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. They have all been placed at the school by their local authority.
- The school follows the methodology of the 'Relationship Development Intervention' programme.
- The school's mission is for pupils to 'make and maintain meaningful relationships; to adapt their thinking and behaviour to everyday real-life challenges and to lead a happier and more fulfilling life'.
- The school receives no pupil premium funding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted without notice.
- The inspector carried out a range of activities, including a tour of the school site, to check that the school complies with the independent school standards.
- The inspector observed teaching across the school and scrutinised pupils' work.
- The inspector observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and at various points during the school day.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, the headteacher and other members of staff. The inspector also had a formal meeting with a group of pupils.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Seven members of staff, other than the headteacher, gave the inspector written responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with two representatives of Oldham local authority.
- The inspector examined school policies to check that they are compliant with the independent school standards and to provide additional information for the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed the school's records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. The inspector also considered the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.

## Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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