

Bright Futures School

164 Oldham Road, Grasscroft, Oldham, Lancashire OL4 4DW

Inspection dates

8–10 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are highly ambitious for the school. Their high expectations for pupils are shared by all the staff. As a result, the school has noticeably improved since the last inspection, and its capacity for further improvement is good.
- Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have excellent relationships with the adults who work with them.
- Many pupils undertake learning activities for the first time since embarking on education, because of the effective strategies used to develop their readiness to learn.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are highly supportive of the school. Many cite the 'transformational effect' the school has had on their child's behaviour and the positive difference this has made to their family life.
- Pupils get on well together. Occasional fallouts are quickly resolved. Pupils develop a good understanding of values such as tolerance and respect. Pupils are polite and courteous.
- Staff, pupils and parents are proud of their school.
- Pupils are well cared for and supported exceptionally well. As a result, many who start the school with very challenging behaviour improve significantly over time.
- Almost all pupils have fallen behind in their learning before they join the school. Staff very quickly help pupils to overcome their negative attitudes to formal education. As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points when they join the school. However, despite pupils' strong progress, too few pupils reach the expected standard by the time they leave the school.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not acquire the full range of skills, experience and qualifications they need to pursue their chosen careers.

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 the sixth-form provision by:
 - securing work experience placements which are well matched to students' interests and aptitudes
 - giving all students the opportunity to study for qualifications in English and mathematics as well as other subjects which interest them
 - establishing partnerships with other providers to increase the range of programmes of study offered to students
 - raising aspirations for students so that more move onto education, employment and training which better meet their aspirations and talents.
- Improve the impact that teaching has on pupils' achievement by:
 - increasing the frequency and amount of time allocated to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
 - moving pupils' learning on more quickly in reading, writing and mathematics
 - setting aspirational targets for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics so that more pupils achieve the expected standard at the end of each key stage.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Staff, parents and pupils share the leaders' vision for the school. Leaders are unswerving in their endeavours to help pupils quickly acquire the key social, communication and life skills they need to be successful.
- Leaders have been relentless in their determination to appoint the best teachers and support staff they can. Their patience, determination and refusal to accept second best has paid dividends. Parents hold the school in high regard and cite the skill, dedication and care of staff as a strength.
- Leaders have established an effective system of performance management. While leaders set high expectations for staff, staff value leaders' considerate and caring approach. The daily staff briefings, weekly team meetings and frequent training days make sure that staff are well equipped to do their jobs well. Consequently, staff morale is high.
- Leaders ensure that the needs of each pupil are exceptionally well understood and met. Leaders prioritise developing pupils' social behaviour, including their concentration, attentiveness and communication. Consequently, pupils very quickly develop the key skills they need in order to be ready to engage in academic study.
- Leaders ensure that the school's core curriculum is complemented by an extensive range of wider opportunities. The school is making use of the wealth of cultural and historical resources locally for trips and visits. Pupils visited the Imperial War Museum during a project on World War II, as well as the Museum of Science and Industry to enhance their learning in science. The school makes good use of local amenities, including the library, park, swimming pool and riding stables, to broaden pupils' learning experiences.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of British values. During the inspection pupils worked together to create a poppy wreath which they planned to lay at the local cenotaph the next day. Pupils enthusiastically debate diverse topics such as what they would do if they were prime minister for a day and whether Britain should leave the European Union.
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on their own behaviour. Staff support pupils in planning and preparing for new experiences so that pupils increase their skills and confidence in tackling unfamiliar situations. Staff make good use of opportunities to reinforce teaching about the impact of pupils' behaviour on other people and to encourage their consideration and compassion towards others. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school gate.
- The school develops pupils as responsible citizens. Timely interventions by staff help pupils develop a strong moral code. While younger pupils learn right from wrong, older pupils have opportunities to consider and debate complex issues as euthanasia, slavery and the refugee crisis. Pupils hold coffee mornings to raise funds for charity and collect donations for the local food bank.
- The school provides careers guidance and a range of work-related learning activities for pupils. However, leaders have not ensured that they pay sufficient heed to the interests and talents of pupils when helping them plan their next steps.

- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance, informed by a wealth of evidence, including the views of key stakeholders. Where leaders have identified weaknesses, actions they have put in place have had a positive impact. As a result, the effectiveness of the provision has improved since the last inspection.
- The school receives no additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Leaders carefully consider how the funding allocated is used to address the priorities set out in pupils' plans. The carefully considered use of this funding enables pupils to make strong progress.
- Leaders recognise the importance of working with external partners if the school is to continue to flourish. Leaders' engagement with the local authority's safeguarding programme has helped the school to keep up to date with training. The partnership with an educational psychologist has given the school further insight into the needs of their pupils. It has also provided external validation for the impact of their provision for pupils with special educational needs.

The governance of the school

- The school manager, head of learning and head of development have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They have a shared vision and ambition for the school that is well communicated to staff, parents and pupils. They are realistic in what they can achieve so that they do not compromise the quality of provision for pupils presently in their care.
- Frequent communication with senior leaders means that the school manager is well informed about what is going on in the school.
- The school manager ensures that the funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well to address the needs identified in their statements and education, health and care plans.
- The school manager ensures that the head of learning is held to account through rigorous and robust performance management processes. Where training needs are identified, and this matches the school's needs, the proprietors make sure that leaders access relevant courses.
- The school manager acknowledges that more needs to be done to keep up to date with statutory requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The teacher in charge of safeguarding makes sure that staff are kept up to date in their training. Staff make sure that they keep a close eye on pupils and are particularly mindful of the additional vulnerabilities associated with the pupils' special educational needs. Regular opportunities for staff to share key information make sure that nothing is missed. Parents, staff and pupils are unanimous in their opinion that the pupils are kept safe at all times. Many of the older pupils regularly play online games at home. However, all understand how to minimise the associated risks of engaging with strangers over the internet. Younger pupils are taught important messages, such as their body belongs to them and to tell an adult if they are worried or upset. Record-keeping is thorough. The school works well with different agencies as appropriate.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff deploy a wealth of knowledge, skills and understanding to engage pupils in learning. Staff are successful in turning around pupils' entrenched negative attitudes. They instil a love of learning and a positive attitude which helps pupils achieve academic success.
- The school's systematic approach to addressing pupils' social communication needs ensures that all pupils, from their different starting points, quickly acquire the skills and confidence that they need to be successful students.
- The comprehensive assessment of pupils' personal and academic competencies when they join the school is used to inform pupils' personalised plans. Staff regularly review each pupil's progress. They set achievable next steps so that pupils make good progress, particularly in the acquisition of social and communication skills.
- Staff plan well-considered learning opportunities which are closely matched to the needs and aptitudes of individual pupils. They pay heed to pupils' interests and plan activities which have meaningful links to everyday life. As a result, pupils look forward to their lessons.
- Staff relationships with pupils are exceptional. Pupils are willing to take risks because of the trust they place in the adults that work with them. This willingness to attempt tasks helps pupils to make good progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their close observation of pupils during lessons helps them shape their questioning and adapt tasks so that they constantly move pupils learning forward. High-quality feedback makes sure that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Staff are adept at giving praise and positive reinforcement, which motivates pupils as well as helping them understand what is expected. Pupils take pride in their own work as well as that of their classmates.
- Parents are well informed about how well their children are getting on in school. This provides opportunities for them to follow up on their children's learning at home.
- However, despite pupils' strong progress, not enough time is allocated to teaching English and mathematics so that more pupils are able to achieve the expected standards by the end of each key stage.
- Teachers manage well the competing tensions of rebuilding pupils' confidence in their academic capabilities with setting increasingly challenging work. However, teachers do not move pupils' learning on quickly enough once they have confirmed that pupils have grasped key knowledge and skills.

The personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school is a haven for the pupils who attend. Many have experienced only failure in their previous schools and are in crisis when they arrive. Staff are highly skilled at

developing excellent relationships with these vulnerable pupils. New pupils quickly settle into school life and start to flourish.

- Lunchtimes and breaktimes are filled with chatter and laughter. Pupils benefit enormously from the opportunity to practise their social skills, as everyone sits down to eat together.
- Pupils are curious. They ask challenging questions and make insightful comments about some very challenging and complex issues. Pupils have grappled with the dilemmas faced by medical staff with limited resources during natural disasters, debated their views on whom they would vote for in the recent presidential election in the United States of America and reflected on whether God exists.
- Pupils treat each other and staff with the greatest respect. They value everyone regardless of their faith, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Staff ensure that pupils are given a wealth of opportunities to find out about other religions, disabilities and cultures through the well-considered personal development programmes.
- Teachers encourage pupils to look after themselves. Pupils take part in regular gym sessions, horse riding and swimming. For younger pupils, regular visits to a local play centre not only provide opportunities to develop their physical skills but also to socialise with other younger children.
- Pupils learn to cope with everyday activities which they often find overwhelming. During the inspection, pupils baked a broccoli and cheese dish. They overcame their sensory aversions to some of the smells, tastes and textures, not only by preparing but also eating the dish. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the range of meals they had learned to prepare, which will stand them in good stead for independent living.
- Staff know pupils well and encourage their interests. Many of the pupils have skills and talents which could lead to high-value academic qualifications and successful careers. However, although pupils are given advice and guidance about their future pathways, this is not sufficiently aspirational.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Most of the pupils attending the school have presented with challenging behaviour in their previous schools. Many have a history of poor school attendance, exclusions and isolation. Within a short space of time at the school, as a result of the systematic approach to developing pupils' social and communication skills, as well as setting clear boundaries, pupils' behaviour rapidly improves.
- Pupils are courteous and considerate. Older pupils show an interest in their peers, staff and visitors to the school. Pupils make sure that everyone is treated with respect, for example, by making sure that everyone has a turn to speak during discussions.
- Instances of challenging behaviour are very rare and short-lived. Staff help pupils to learn strategies to manage their emotions. As a result, the school is calm and orderly both during lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Despite poor rates of attendance in their previous schools, almost all pupils attend school regularly. Pupils arrive punctually, so their lessons get off to a prompt start.
- Pupils, staff and parents are adamant that pupils are safe and well cared for. Although pupils have often experienced bullying in their previous schools, they agree that there is

no bullying currently in the school. If any issues did occur, pupils are confident they would be dealt with appropriately by staff.

- Parents speak very highly of the work of the school. Many describe the 'transformational effect' the school has had on their child's behaviour and the positive impact on family life.

The outcomes for children and students

Good

- Pupils enter the school at different ages. Many have experienced disruption to their education when they join the school. All pupils are diagnosed with autism spectrum conditions. Meticulous attention to each pupil's needs, including the most able, means that pupils settle into school life quickly.
- Pupils make substantial and sustained progress over time, particularly with their social and verbal communication skills. From their different starting points, pupils also make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics as well as science and computing.
- Parents are delighted by the progress their children make at the school. One parent noted that her child had made so much progress since he started at the school that he is 'unrecognisable'.
- The school rightly prioritises the development of pupils' social and communication skills, in order to secure pupils' readiness for academic learning. There is a well-developed system for reviewing pupils' progress in developing social and communication skills. The strong leadership of this aspect of the school's work makes sure that pupils' progress is regularly reviewed, targets revised and that pupils' learning moves forward in line with the schools' expectations.
- All the pupils at the school have special education needs, which have not been met by their previous schools, either mainstream or special. For most pupils and their families, Bright Futures School represents their 'last hope'. For those pupils who arrive towards the end of their statutory education, the school is successful in helping them to move on to college where they work towards gaining level 1 and level 2 vocational qualifications. Parents are adamant that prior to joining the school this pathway would not have been possible for their children.
- Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 work towards recognised entry-level and level 1 qualifications around the development of personal, social and employability skills. Most achieve success in these, and move on to study for a level 2 certificate of personal effectiveness.
- For the lower-attaining pupils, the personalised approach to learning ensures that all pupils make strong progress from their starting points, regardless of their cognitive abilities.
- As a consequence of their special educational needs, most pupils are reluctant to read for pleasure. However, staff encourage younger pupils to grasp a range of reading strategies as they share story books with them. Staff encourage the younger pupils to become attuned to the sounds around them and develop their early reading skills. Older pupils confirm that although they do not enjoy reading fiction, they regularly read in their daily lives, for example instruction books and recipe cards.

- The most able pupils read confidently, with fluency and understanding. Additional support given to those pupils who find reading more challenging helps them to quickly develop a range of strategies so that they read with increasing accuracy and confidence.
- All pupils move on to post-16 education. Those pupils who have moved on to college, have done so successfully due to the school's strong transition programme.
- The school does not take into account pupils' interests, talents and ambitions sufficiently when providing work experience, careers advice and access to qualifications. As a result, pupils' pathways do not always reflect their enthusiasms and talents.
- Whilst pupils can gain qualifications in personal development, the school does not offer pupils the opportunity to gain external accreditations in English, mathematics or any other academic subject. This limits pupils' options when they leave the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- All independent school standards are met in relation to sixth-form provision.
- Leaders quite rightly recognised a gap in their provision for their oldest pupils, who are not yet ready to move on to college. Parents are positive that this provision will provide their children with much-needed additional time so that they are well prepared for their next steps.
- The study programmes require improvement. However, it is early days in the development of the 16 to 19 provision. Leaders have not yet given sufficient consideration to the programmes of study they are providing for these students so that students can achieve qualifications relevant to their career ambitions.
- Leaders recognise the need to develop partnerships with other providers, in order to offer students the range of opportunities required to develop their personal, social and employability skills. The delay in securing this broad offer means that the provision does not meet the different needs, interests and aptitudes of students.
- Leaders ensure that they continue to build on the individualised programmes in key stage 5. The seamless transition from key stage 4 ensures that no time is lost as pupils move into key stage 5.
- Students take part in a wide range of enrichment activities and volunteering opportunities that the school offers. They contribute well to their development as responsible citizens.
- Staff ensure that pupils in key stage 5 continue to develop their social and communication skills, working towards further personal development qualifications.
- Pupils' regular attendance and increased engagement with academic learning means they continue to build on the good progress they made in key stage 4.

School details

Unique reference number	105748
DfE registration number	353/6015
Inspection number	10008576

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Bright Futures School Limited
Chair	Dixon Milburn
Headteacher	Alison Hughes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,600–42,000
Telephone number	01457 878738
Website	www.brightfutureschool.co.uk
Email address	office@brightfutureschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 February 2013

Information about this school

- Bright Futures School is situated in a small village near Oldham.
- The school opened as an independent special school in March 2011. Since September 2011, the school has been run by 'Bright Futures School Limited'.
- Bright Futures School Limited has two directors. One of the directors takes on the role of proprietor. He is known as the school manager. The other director is the school's head of development. The head of development and head of learning are the school's senior leaders. The head of learning is nominally the headteacher; however, the school does not use this title.

- The school is registered to admit 10 pupils aged from five to 18 years. There are currently eight pupils on roll, aged between five and 17 years.
- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum conditions. All pupils have an educational, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs and have been placed by their local authority.
- The school follows the methodology of the 'Relationship Development Intervention' programme.
- The school has provided education for post-16 students since January 2016, following a material change approved by the Department for Education.
- 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'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of pupils working in classrooms and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including the senior leaders and school manager. Account was taken of 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspector spoke to a representative of one of the local authorities which has placed pupils at the school as well as an educational psychologist who works with the school.
- The inspector spoke with pupils in formal interviews, during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector considered a large variety of documentation related to the school's work: the school's view of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
- The inspector scrutinised documents and records concerning safeguarding, health and safety and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector considered the eight responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. The inspector spoke to the parents of half of the pupils during the course of the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.
- The inspector conducted a tour of the premises with the school's senior leaders.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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