

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 February 2017

Mrs Kate Connolly
Headteacher
Brownhill School
Heights Lane
Rochdale
Lancashire
OL12 0PZ

Dear Mrs Connolly

Short inspection of Brownhill School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017 with Doreen Davenport, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. At the previous inspection, the 'loose federation' between Brownhill School and Rochdale Pupil Referral Unit was developing. The two schools now work together as the Brownhill Learning Community. This means that although each school retains its separate official identity, in every other aspect they now work as one school. In this letter, I use the term 'school' to refer solely to Brownhill School.

Since the previous inspection you and your colleagues have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Your subject leaders have embraced their roles and responsibilities. Their regular work scrutiny and lesson observations give them a good insight into the quality of teaching and learning in their subject. You have made sure that they receive the training and time they need to do their jobs well. They talk positively about the support they receive from the 'subject champions' on each site. They told inspectors that this helps to raise the profile of their subject across the whole school. These subject leaders provide support to their non-specialist colleagues. As a result, their non-specialist colleagues are more confident and knowledgeable in teaching subjects outside their normal area of expertise. This is helping pupils to make good progress across the curriculum. You recognise that these subject leaders now need to have time to work with their mainstream colleagues to further improve their practice.

You have refined and improved your curriculum offer. The curriculum lead has

made sure that the curriculum paves the way for pupils to gain recognised qualifications at key stage 4. This good curriculum offer, coupled with high quality careers information, advice and guidance, stands pupils in good stead to secure places on college courses, training programmes or to get a job. Subject leaders make sure that they keep up to date with the qualifications offered in their subject. They give careful consideration to which qualifications would be most appropriate for the pupils in your school. Subject teachers make sure that the curriculum is well organised so that pupils in mixed-age classes cover all the programmes of study. Subject teachers also make sure that pupils have opportunities to develop their interest in a subject. For example, the school took part in British Science Week as well as the 'What's under your feet?' national earthworm survey.

Since the previous inspection, you have implemented an assessment and tracking system to help teachers review pupils' progress from their different starting points and identify pupils' next steps in learning. You complement this with information about pupil's behaviour and attendance. You make sure that this information is kept up to date on a half-termly basis. Although, you have now gathered this wealth of information about the attainment and progress of pupils, your information management system does not yet provide you with a readily accessible overview of pupils' performance. You recognise the urgency with which this needs to be resolved so that senior leaders, teachers, welfare staff and governors can quickly access the information they need.

You and your colleagues manage the different needs of the pupils who attend the school and the pupil referral unit well. You have given careful consideration to the organisation of classes across the three sites. At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that those staff who teach autistic pupils needed training to improve the learning, attitudes, behaviour and attendance of these pupils. Staff talked positively to inspectors about the training they have received. They feel that this training, coupled with the increased engagement with other professionals including speech and language therapists, has developed their skills and confidence in working with these pupils. Staff are making good use of the information set out in pupils' education and health care plans to plan provision. Parents of autistic pupils talked to inspectors about the positive difference the school has made for their children's attendance, behaviour and learning.

Since the previous inspection, you have made considerable improvements to the school. You have the support of your staff who agree that the school is well led and managed and has improved since the previous inspection. You have ensured that staff enjoy working at the school and are proud to be part of the team. You recognise that it is important now to give your staff time to embed the new ways of working so that senior leaders and governors can then fully evaluate their effectiveness in improving outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff receive frequent, comprehensive training in safeguarding. Staff are highly vigilant. They make sure that they pass on any concerns to the designated

safeguarding leads. These concerns are followed up assiduously by the welfare team. The welfare manager makes sure she keeps in frequent contact with the designated safeguarding leads on each site and that she works closely with other agencies when appropriate. The welfare team's record keeping is detailed and well organised. You make sure that you check the suitability of all your staff to work with children. Consequently, pupils are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- You have successfully reversed the decline in pupils' attendance. You have increased the capacity of the school's attendance team so that they are able to respond quickly to any issues. You have made sure that parents are in no doubt about their responsibilities to make certain that their children attend school regularly. The centre managers are making good use of the information about pupils' attendance to respond to any emerging patterns or trends. For example, the staff at Heights Lane have recently taken effective action to improve pupils' punctuality. The attendance team have made sure that they use the legal measures available to them when all other options have been exhausted.
- Staff make sure that the day gets off to a good start. They have established routines which make sure that pupils settle in class quickly and are ready to learn. Staff make effective use of breakfast and lunchtimes to build strong relationships and promote good behaviour. Well-established routines ensure that no time is lost between lessons and pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils, parents and staff are impressed with the new behaviour rewards system which they feel is making a positive difference.
- The overwhelming majority of your pupils exhibited challenging behaviour in their previous schools and many have complex social, emotional and mental health needs. However, almost all pupils improve their behaviour when they join the school. You now collect information about every pupil's behaviour, in every lesson, every day. This helps senior leaders to target support and evaluate the impact of interventions. Consequently, there has been a reduction in the number of exclusions for almost all groups of pupils.
- Many of your pupils have considerable gaps in their education prior to joining your school. Almost all of your pupils have fallen behind their peers in reading. You make sure that staff provide intensive support for pupils to help them catch up quickly. Once they have settled in to school, most pupils make good progress, across the curriculum. Teachers are adept at breaking the curriculum down into small steps for pupils. Teachers make use of individual pupil assessment information to plan lessons. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. You recognise that although most pupils make good progress, teachers need to be able to keep a close eye on how quickly individuals, groups and classes are catching up with pupils with similar starting points.
- Governors make sure they visit the different school sites regularly, talking to pupils, parents and staff. They also take time to consider the detailed reports provided by the headteacher so that they are well informed about the work of the school. The federation of the school and pupil referral unit presents a

challenge for governors when held to account for the effectiveness of the school as a separate entity to the Rochdale Pupil Referral unit. Governors acknowledge that they could make more precise use of the published assessment information available to help them. Governors have already sought additional support and training from the local authority to further improve their effectiveness.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders should ensure that they develop the school's information management system so that it provides governors, senior and middle leaders, the welfare team and teachers with a readily accessible overview of pupils' performance.
- Leaders should provide opportunities for subject leaders to work with colleagues in mainstream schools to further develop their subject leadership skills.
- Governors should make more precise use of the published assessment information available to them to challenge and support.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rochdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we met with you, senior teachers, teaching and support staff. An inspector met members of the governing body including the chair. We also spoke with the representatives of the local authority. Inspectors visited two of the school's three sites: Heights Lane and Darnhill. Only one parent responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, so inspectors met with five parents and considered the school's own survey of parents. We met formally with a group of staff and considered the 63 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff. We spoke to two groups of pupils and considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online survey of pupils. We visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. We also observed pupils at break and lunchtimes. We looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and the school's self-evaluation and action plans. We conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.