

Inspection of Brownhill School

Heights Lane, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 0PZ

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are valued, listened to and well cared for in this school. They receive a warm welcome into school each morning. Staff ensure that pupils feel settled and happy before learning begins. Pupils learn to trust the adults around them and this builds strong, positive relationships.

Pupils learn in small groups with staff who understand the individual special educational needs and/or disabilities of each pupil. There is a strong focus on pupils' personal development, mental health and well-being.

The school ensures that pupils have opportunities to enjoy experiences outside of the curriculum. This includes the outdoors, visits to the beach, libraries, parks and a local ski slope. The school has carefully considered the activities which support pupils' social and emotional development.

The school has high expectations for pupils. However, pupils do not achieve consistently well. While pupils are responding well to the new curriculum, its implementation means that their learning across different subjects is uneven.

The new approach to managing pupils' behaviour has had a calming effect across the school. Pupils strive to behave well and appreciate the reward points they receive.

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

In close partnership with the local authority, the school has taken swift action over the last year to improve the curriculum and other aspects of school life. These actions are having a positive impact.

The curriculum, especially in key stages 1, 2 and 3, has had a complete makeover. The school has thought carefully about pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs, as well as what they want pupils to know and remember. The curriculum makes clear the knowledge that pupils should learn and when they should learn it. However, the school is in the early stages of implementing the new curriculum. This means that some staff are not well equipped to deliver new subject content effectively. As a result, some pupils do not build their knowledge over time. In addition, the checks on pupils' learning are underdeveloped. Staff do not routinely spot, and then address, gaps in pupils' learning. This stops pupils from building on what they know.

Improvements to the curriculum have not made enough difference in key stage 4. Here, the curriculum does not allow all pupils to study a broad and ambitious range of subjects. Some pupils access vocational and technical courses through alternative provision. However, this option is not available for all pupils. This means that some pupils in key stage 4 do not achieve as well as they could.

There is a sharp focus on reading for all pupils. Pupils in the primary school have daily phonics and reading sessions. In the secondary school, staff identify pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge and ensure that they receive the support that they need to catch up quickly. All staff have been well trained to deliver the phonics programme and reading curriculum consistently well. The books that pupils read stimulate their imaginations, promote discussion and link with other curriculum subjects. Books are also linked to pupils' personal development. Pupils empathise with characters facing some challenging life decisions. The school's actions allow pupils to develop into fluent and confident readers.

Pupils' behaviour is improving. They have time to reflect and discuss their emotions and behaviour with staff. This allows pupils to learn about themselves and to plan strategies to manage their behaviour better next time.

While attendance overall has improved, it is low in key stage 4 and it has been for some time. The school works closely with the local authority to improve attendance. However, this is not having enough impact on pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Pupils learn about democracy and the importance of having a vote. They discuss and reflect on some challenging topics locally and globally, including equality, human rights and responsibilities. They learn to listen to opposite views and to respect others' opinions.

The school ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. This includes pupils learning about cyber-bullying, sexting and the dangers of online gambling. They learn about positive relationships and the importance of consent. This is all carefully thought through and delivered in an age-appropriate way so pupils can make sensible and informed choices.

The careers programme helps pupils to know about the variety of options available to them when they leave school. They learn about different careers, as well as the skills that employers would want, such as having clear communication and good timekeeping. When pupils leave Year 11, they move into a range of colleges and training opportunities.

The school's welfare team works closely with families. A parents' forum and school family fun days help to strengthen relationships between home and school.

Governors have worked diligently with the school over the past year. They have ensured that many of the actions for improvement have been realised. They have an ambitious vision for the future of the school and have the knowledge and skills to hold leaders to account.

Staff are overwhelmingly in support of the positive improvements that the school has implemented in the last academic year. They feel valued and supported by leaders. The improvements in the curriculum have given teachers a clear structure to use which has reduced their workload. Staff have contributed to the vision for

school improvement. They have trust in leaders and governors to continue the improvements required in school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum at key stage 4 is not as ambitious or as broad as it could be. Not all pupils have access to vocational or technical courses. This hinders pupils' opportunities for further education, training or employment. The school should ensure that pupils in key stage 4 have access to a broad curriculum.
- Some subject curriculums are further on in their implementation than others. This means that the delivery of the curriculum is not consistently effective. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge well enough over time. The school should ensure that all subject curriculums are implemented as intended.
- The checks on pupils' learning do not identify gaps in knowledge well enough. This means that pupils are not able to build on a secure foundation when they meet new learning. The school should ensure that there is an effective approach to the use of assessment strategies and information so that pupils' misconceptions are addressed.
- Pupils' attendance drops significantly in key stage 4. This has a negative effect on pupils' learning. The school should review their policy and procedures to ensure they are doing all it can to improve pupils' attendance in key stage 4.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the

school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	105861
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10268165
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kath Bromfield
Headteacher	Hannah Speakman
Website	www.theblc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has taken up post since the last inspection.
- The school is in a federation with Rochdale pupil referral service. The federation is known as The Brownhill Learning Community.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and seven unregistered alternative providers.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- At the time of this inspection, the school had no children in the Reception Year.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, governors, including the chair of the governing body, subject leaders and senior leaders. Inspectors also met with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and English, art and design and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, parents and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation. They also spoke with some parents and carers and held discussions with pupils and staff about the school. Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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