

# Lower Pastures

Broadhead Road, Hoddlesden, Nr Darwen BB3 3QP

## Inspection dates

4–6 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and assessment is too variable. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently good progress in all subjects.
- Leaders and governors do not provide teachers with enough support and guidance to teach successfully across a wide range of subjects. Sharing subject expertise and making links with other schools are not well established.
- Gaps in pupils' learning are not picked up quickly. Work is not always pitched at the right level because tracking systems are not rigorous.
- Leaders' short-term plans are not sharp enough. It is not always clear how proposed changes will improve the provision for pupils or how the impact could be checked in the future.
- Governors do not hold the school sufficiently to account for the academic outcomes of pupils or the quality of teaching.

### The school has the following strengths

- The long-term vision for this school is set out clearly by senior leaders. The staff team is committed to this vision and substantial improvements have been made.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted well and they make good gains in self-confidence and self-esteem. These increase the longer they stay at the school.
- Staff skilfully manage pupils' behaviour. They have successfully established a positive learning environment in their new classroom.
- Pupils are proud of their school and recognise the progress they have made since they arrived. They attend regularly.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. Staff at all levels are extremely vigilant about pupils' well-being.
- The school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The school works successfully with a range of agencies to provide pupils with effective care and welfare support.

### 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?

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
  - developing effective monitoring systems, so that governors can hold the school to account for pupils' outcomes and for the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that pupils' progress is tracked effectively
  - providing teachers with the support, guidance and subject expertise they need to teach the full curriculum that the school is offering
  - ensuring that short-term plans make it clear what will be improved for the pupils and how successful implementation will be checked.
- Improve teaching and learning so that:
  - pupils make good progress in lessons and over time across the full range of subjects
  - activities are properly matched to different pupils' abilities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- All the independent school standards are met. Despite substantial improvements, the school is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good school.
- Currently, leaders and governors do not provide teachers with enough support and guidance to teach successfully across the full range of the curriculum. One teacher is required to teach most subjects of the curriculum to pupils who are in a single class spanning key stages 3 and 4. This is a demand that is hard to meet. The school has not yet shared sufficiently in the subject the expertise that is available in the company's other schools.
- Plans are in place to recruit staff with additional subject skills. Pupils say that they would welcome more opportunities to study subjects such as music and drama. Links with other schools locally are not well enough established to access curricular expertise.
- Leaders' long-term vision for developing the school accurately reflects the important priorities that need to be improved, such as improving assessments of pupils' progress and providing more subject expertise in teaching. However, some of the short-term plans are not sharp enough. In these cases, it is not always clear how the proposed changes will improve the provision for pupils or how the impact could be checked in the future.
- Leaders and governors have not held the school to account sufficiently for pupils' academic outcomes. While all pupils make good improvement in their attitudes to learning and their self-confidence, their academic progress is more variable. Not all pupils make good enough progress in their learning while they are at Lower Pastures. Gaps in the learning are not picked up quickly enough on arrival and systems to monitor pupils' rates of progress are not fully embedded.
- School leaders and governors are successful in promoting pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Improvements in these areas have been substantial since the school opened. There is a recognition that these areas are important priorities as they equip pupils with the skills to become successful learners in readiness for a return to mainstream schools. The curriculum gives pupils a good range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in contexts that are meaningful. For example, pupils carefully worked out the costs and made all the plans for a successful camping expedition that they undertook.
- Citizenship lessons and regular house meetings enable pupils to understand democratic processes. Pupils learn to listen to and respect other views and beliefs. They express their opinions in a calm and measured way. Through such activities, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully. They help to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain and for their transition to the next stage of education, care or employment.
- The school works well with a wide range of external agencies to provide pupils with effective care and welfare support. Strong links with local authority representatives, therapists and social workers help to ensure that the needs of the pupils remain central to any decision making.

## Governance

- Governance requires improvement. Pupils' outcomes and teaching and learning are improving but they are not yet good. They are not rigorously scrutinised by governors.
- Governors have been successful in establishing the school and in providing a well-resourced and attractive learning environment. This includes a new, purpose-built classroom which is separate from the pupils' living accommodation.
- Governors hold the school to account for financial and administrative matters, which are carefully scrutinised.
- Leaders and teachers have their training records regularly monitored by governors to ensure that staff are kept updated on all required training. For example, all staff attended a recent briefing on the latest government guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2016) and signed to confirm that they understood their roles and responsibilities.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy is published on the website and is readily available. It meets the most recent government requirements.
- Policies and systems for managing pupils' behaviour, assessing risks, appointing staff, referring concerns to the relevant authorities and restraining pupils are implemented effectively.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Lower Pastures. Both staff and pupils understand the risks associated with living in a remote, rural setting. Relevant training supports staff and enables them to fulfil their duties proficiently.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but it is still too variable. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently good progress in all subjects.
- Gaps in pupils' learning are not picked up quickly enough when pupils arrive at the school. Assessments of pupils' academic abilities on entry and the tracking of their progress are completed but are not rigorous enough. As a result, some pupils make slower progress than they should because work set for them is not always pitched at the right level.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure in teaching communication, mathematical and scientific skills, and the humanities. Learning opportunities are plentiful and purposeful in physical education and outdoor pursuits, where staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. Subject knowledge is less secure in areas such as music and drama where leaders are planning to recruit additional subject expertise. Consequently, pupils have less access to high-quality teaching and make slower progress in some of the aesthetic and creative subjects.
- Teaching rightly concentrates on improving pupils' communication and mathematical skills. These are the areas of learning that most pupils find difficult and where they have fallen behind in the past. Teachers plan activities thoroughly in these areas and make learning interesting and relevant for the pupils. For example, a current study of the book, 'Blood Brothers', will be concluded with a theatre visit to see the play. Pupils are looking forward to this outing with a great sense of anticipation.

- Teachers establish good relationships with pupils who often present challenging behaviour both in class and around the school. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well. Teachers, well supported by teaching assistants and care staff, are skilled at defusing situations. Pupils learn to moderate their behaviour and recognise the impact it might have on others. As a result, most lessons proceed in a calm and orderly way. Pupils told the inspector how much they enjoyed and appreciated this aspect of the school because 'we can get on with our learning without the teacher having to stop all the time'.
- Most-able pupils, when identified, are given a suitable range of extension activities. Plans show that many of these tasks are open-ended, allowing pupils to use and apply their knowledge and understanding in practical situations. Since the school has opened, no pupils have been admitted who would fall into this category.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes towards school during their time at Lower Pastures. For many, this is the first time that this has happened. Pupils grow in confidence to try new things and make choices.
- On a daily basis, pupils experience the democratic process as they make decisions about their life in school and in their home. For example, they debate and agree with staff what constitutes poor behaviour in class, including different types of bullying. They also discuss suitable rewards and sanctions. Pupils recognise and accept that poor behaviour results in consequences such as loss of privileges.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They also understand how to keep safe and healthy, including when they take part in off-site visits.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Learning takes place in a supportive, yet challenging environment. It is rarely interrupted by inappropriate behaviour.
- When problems do occur, other pupils know not to join in with those who are finding it hard to manage. Staff form a very strong and united team and pupils value the consistent way in which they are treated.
- Staff challenge pupils' inappropriate behaviour, including unacceptable language, and pupils generally respond positively because they know what is expected. Pupils recognise what is fair and trust adults to guide and advise them for what is best. 'I don't always get what I want here, but the staff always explain why and they are fair most of the time,' was typical of the comments made by pupils to the inspector.
- Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. A comprehensive range of risk assessments means that staff are vigilant and take swift action to address concerns.
- Most pupils had poor levels of attendance in their previous schools but now attend school regularly.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The school has been operating for less than one year and no pupils have received results for external qualifications. A number of pupils will be taking GCSE, City & Guilds and BTEC national diploma examinations during this school year.
- All pupils who are placed at the school are in the care of local authorities. Most have been absent from school for extended periods or have been excluded from schools before they arrive. Some have experienced both.
- Consequently, pupils often have significant gaps in their learning and their attitudes towards school when they arrive are often negative. All have special educational needs and none is identified as being among the most able. There are very few pupils on roll and the school concentrates on improving their attitudes to learning and the appropriateness of their behaviour, and building their self-confidence.
- Although rates of academic progress are improving, the school is still not ensuring that all pupils make good progress from their starting points. Lack of rigour in screening pupils when they first arrive at the school makes it more difficult for teachers to pinpoint exactly where to pitch the learning. In some lessons, the same work is set for the whole group which means that, for some pupils, the tasks are not hard enough.
- Nevertheless, examination of records, scrutiny of pupils' work and talking to pupils confirm that most make expected levels of progress during their time at Lower Pastures. Some make better progress than this, especially in their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Staff accept that pupils' overall rates of progress academically are not fast enough. Pupils' earlier educational experiences mean that many have fallen well behind their peers and so now have a great deal more to catch up on.
- Pupils make best progress in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. This is because these feature more regularly in the curriculum and are taught confidently. Pupils read widely and regularly. They are keen to talk about books they have recently enjoyed and how their reading skills have been enhanced by trips to the local library. Pupils also explain how improvements in their reading skills are helping them to access the wider curriculum opportunities that the school provides.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development and in their ability to moderate their behaviour in most circumstances. They become confident learners and most are ready to learn in the lessons they attend.
- Careers education and guidance are effective. Staff talk regularly to pupils about future careers and aspirations. An external provider visits the school to offer specific careers guidance. School staff provide pupils with work-related learning and other opportunities to gain a range of suitable nationally recognised qualifications.
- Transition arrangements from the school to the next setting are comprehensive.

## School details

Unique reference number	142531
DfE registration number	889/6014
Inspection number	10020878

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	Special
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sean Anthony Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Diane Wood
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,040
Telephone number	01254 706525
Website	<a href="http://www.roachesschool.net">www.roachesschool.net</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:dwood@caretodayparallelpupils.net">dwood@caretodayparallelpupils.net</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Lower Pastures is part of the Care Today group.
- The school states that its overarching aim is 'to provide a warm, friendly, safe and supportive environment based on nurturing principles'. Academically it aims to 'actively promote and support education attainment of children with special educational needs with regard to age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential'.
- Pupils often join the school after a history of exclusion and long-term absence from mainstream schools or other special school provision.
- Staff specialise in working with young people with a range of complex needs and specifically in supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

- Most pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils live at a residential children's home that is owned by the company.
- The school was registered with the Department for Education on 23 November 2015. This is the school's first inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in several lessons, all of which were jointly visited with the headteacher.
- The inspector accompanied pupils and staff to an outdoor education activity.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, care manager, teacher and a range of other professionals. Telephone calls were made to the virtual headteacher (who has responsibility for this school and others within the group) and a social worker who had responsibility for a pupil placed at the school.
- The inspector met with pupils both formally and informally. He heard them read, and looked at their work books and the school's records of their progress.
- There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school, including those available on its website. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.

## Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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