

Lower Pastures

Broadhead Road, Hoddlesden, Nr Darwen BB3 3QP

Inspection dates

13–14 November 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and her staff have a deep understanding of the needs and abilities of pupils in the school.
- Leaders have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They have improved the quality of education that the school provides.
- The quality of teaching is good. Staff mainly provide well-planned lessons that increase pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They trust adults and say they look after them well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Adults manage occasional examples of misbehaviour effectively.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor has a secure overview of the quality of education in the school. He challenges the headteacher diligently.
- The quality assurance manager holds the headteacher to account effectively. She accurately identifies areas for development.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It contributes strongly to the progress that pupils make.
- Sometimes, teachers do not match work in mathematics closely enough to pupils' abilities or give them opportunities to apply their skills in other subjects.
- Occasionally, staff do not question pupils in a way that deepens their learning or gives them the opportunity to think for themselves.
- Leaders' action plans for improvement do not consistently focus on the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' presentation, though improving, sometimes shows a lack of pride in work.

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?

- Ensure that, in their action plans for school improvement, leaders focus more consistently on the intended impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.
- Make sure that staff more consistently ask questions of pupils which give them opportunities to deepen their learning and to think for themselves.
- Ensure that teachers match work in mathematics more closely to pupils' abilities and provide more opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum, where appropriate, so that that their progress is even stronger.
- Further improve the presentation of pupils' work, so that it more consistently shows that pupils take pride in it.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards and other requirements are met.
- The headteacher has high expectations of her staff and pupils. She has taken effective action since the last inspection to improve the quality of education at the school and address the areas for improvement identified at that time. She is clear about the school's strengths and areas for development. She has devised a suitable plan for school improvement that centres effectively on appropriate actions and their associated timescales. Sometimes, however, the intended impact of those actions does not focus on pupils' outcomes.
- There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The class teacher and the teaching assistant have benefited from observing effective practice in other schools in the company. The headteacher has also arranged for staff to study for extra qualifications to enhance their practice, such as a diploma for teaching assistants and a degree at Master's level. Because of these strategies, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils now make good progress from their low starting points.
- Leaders have put more effective tracking and assessment systems in place since the previous inspection. Staff now assess pupils accurately on entry to the school and have a much more secure picture of the progress they make during their time there. They have effective methods of tracking pupils' progress across a broad range of subjects, which give them a clear overview of where the gaps are in pupils' learning. Staff then focus on giving appropriate support to address any misconceptions.
- The checks that the headteacher makes on the quality of teaching have improved. Checks are now thorough and this has helped to secure the effective practice that is now evident. For example, the headteacher meets with her staff every week and analyses pupils' performance with them. She then gives staff focuses for improvement or further development for the following week.
- All pupils who attend the school are children looked after, and each comes from a different local authority. Most have an education, health and care plan that is funded by each local authority. The school makes effective use of all funding it receives to ensure that the majority of pupils make the best progress they can. The headteacher and her staff team have a detailed knowledge of their pupils' backgrounds, which informs the work they do with them. They make constructive contributions to the reviews of pupils' personal education plans, making sure the suggested actions are useful and tailored to each pupil. Key to the success that the school has had in improving pupils' progress has been a deep understanding of pupils' needs and an uncompromising desire to see them do their best. Staff successfully focus on developing pupils' self-esteem, improving their attitudes and encouraging good attendance. By doing so, they provide a solid base for them to make good progress in their learning.
- Staff are positive about the work of the school. In the staff survey, they indicated that

they feel proud to work at the school and they feel well supported. They responded that they appreciate the training they receive and think that leaders improve their performance effectively.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and leaders ensure that it meets the needs of the pupils. Leaders are effective in enhancing pupils' learning and promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They do this through, for example, exciting activities like school camps and regular trips to a local sports centre to play basketball. Leaders successfully develop pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and equalities through carefully planned lessons in personal, social, health and economic education and in religious education.

Governance

- There are no governors in the school. The proprietor has appointed a quality assurance manager since the last inspection. She visits the school every half-term and checks on the quality of education. She has a clear overview of school's strengths and areas for development. She writes detailed reports, which she feeds back to the headteacher, with suggested next steps for further improvement, particularly around aspects of teaching and learning. She also regularly reports her findings to the proprietor. These checks by the quality assurance manager contribute effectively to the improvement evident in the school. They also ensure that the headteacher is held thoroughly to account for her work.
- The proprietor has a secure understanding of the progress that the school has made since the last inspection. He provides strong challenge to the headteacher in formal monthly meetings, in which he checks on a range of matters, including the progress of pupils and safeguarding arrangements. He is also kept up to date with day-to-day issues through the school's email system.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures for reporting are suitable and the designated lead keeps detailed records. She takes prompt action about any concerns as required.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures and the various signs of abuse. Pupils who attend the school start their time there with safeguarding issues from their previous experiences. Because of this, staff are extremely vigilant and quickly develop a deep knowledge of pupils and their needs.
- Leaders provide staff with extra training to address specific issues that may arise. For example, staff recently received training connected to 'county lines' gang violence and exploitation matters. Leaders followed this with age-appropriate training on the same theme for pupils. This ensured that pupils had all the information they needed to avoid the dangers of this issue, enabling them to keep themselves safe.
- The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy, which complies with all the government's current requirements. The headteacher makes this available on request. The school does not have its own website, but the policy also appears on the company's website.

- The school's record of vetting and checks on members of staff is thorough and meets requirements. The designated lead is clear about the correct action to take, should any issues arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- There is now more effective planning of teaching in place. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons that typically interest pupils and enable them to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding. They mostly match the work accurately to pupils' abilities. Although none of the pupils is most-able, teachers provide work with a level of demand that is usually in line with pupils' needs. However, on just a few occasions, the work that teachers provide in mathematics can be either too easy or too hard.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and have effective strategies for managing it. They contribute well to developing pupils' self-esteem by using carefully targeted words of praise and encouragement. Relationships are warm and trusting between staff and pupils. Staff encourage pupils to have positive attitudes to their learning. Occasionally, however, pupils disengage from their work, usually because of their particular behavioural needs. In these circumstances, staff manage pupils' reactions effectively to bring them back on task.
- Staff provide opportunities for pupils to use skills they learn in English lessons in other subjects. For example, they use their writing skills to describe their design for a kite in design and technology work. However, there are fewer examples of mathematics being used across the curriculum.
- Staff make mostly accurate assessments of pupils' understanding in a range of subjects. They now have a much more accurate view of pupils' abilities on entry to the school. They use the information that they obtain from their assessments to plan activities that mainly meet pupils' needs effectively. However, there are a few occasions when work in mathematics is not as closely matched to pupils' abilities as it could be. Teachers provide support as appropriate and, typically, adapt tasks well to suit pupils' requirements and address any misconceptions. Teachers follow the school's assessment and marking policy.
- In the main, staff question pupils effectively. They encourage them to think for themselves and to work as independently as possible, considering their various needs. Sometimes, however, adults can be a little too quick to provide answers for pupils. In these circumstances, staff do not deepen pupils' learning as much as possible.
- The school gives annual reports to carers, which provide helpful and accurate information about their child's progress and development. Leaders provide useful information during periodic reviews of pupils' personal education plans throughout the year. They also provide a weekly bulletin by email for all carers, so that they are kept up to date with the learning that takes place.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and their self-esteem grows during their time in the school. For example, pupils felt comfortable enough to talk with the inspector about their opinions of school.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They trust staff and told the inspector that the adults look after them well. They know how to stay safe on the internet. This is because their teachers have given them the information that they need. They understand that, for instance, they should not share their personal details and should avoid online chat rooms.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well served by a range of activities that pupils enjoy. For instance, they go on camping trips, take part in the school council every week and organise events to raise money for good causes, such as cancer charities. These activities also help to develop pupils' sense of responsibility, which contributes effectively to their learning to become good citizens.
- Leaders provide impartial careers advice for pupils. They arrange regular visits to a variety of careers events, such as apprenticeship fairs and visits to colleges. This ensures that pupils have the information that they need to help them consider the next stages of their education or employment.
- Bullying of any kind is rare. Relationships between pupils are mostly friendly and cooperative. Leaders record incidents of more serious misbehaviour and manage them effectively. However, there are not many of these. There have been no racist or homophobic incidents.
- Although pupils' presentation is improving, it is sometimes untidy, showing an occasional lack of pride in work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in class, considering their various behavioural and emotional needs. Staff manage any examples of misbehaviour effectively. They do not allow them to cause any significant loss of learning time.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. They are clear about the school's routines and staff supervise them effectively.
- Pupils respond well to the school's rewards system, which encourages good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' attendance improves dramatically on entry to the school, compared with their record at previous schools. Some case studies show pupils achieving full attendance within a short time. The positive and supportive learning environment that leaders provide contributes significantly to the good attendance rate.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils who attend the school typically stay for less than a year. The vast majority of pupils

tend to be in key stage 3 and there have been no pupils in Year 11. There have been no pupils who have taken public examinations. All have missed substantial periods of their education and arrive at the school with many gaps in their learning. All pupils have significant needs and have experienced a variety of safeguarding issues. Despite these factors, current pupils make good progress from their low starting points across a range of subjects.

- In reading, writing and mathematics, current pupils make considerable progress, some of which is very strong. For example, the school's assessment information shows reading ages increasing by up to 30 months in a period of two terms. In mathematics, pupils acquire knowledge and skills effectively, making rapid progress from simple adding and subtracting to multiplication of three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers. They also have opportunities to use their reasoning and problem-solving skills to good effect. However, there are a few occasions when staff do not match mathematical work appropriately, so that pupils either find it too easy or struggle to complete it.
- Teachers give plenty of opportunities for pupils to read. Those whom the inspector heard reading aloud in class showed accuracy and fluency appropriate to their level of ability. Leaders have built up a wide range of books of different types, both fiction and non-fiction, for pupils to read. They have augmented this by providing pupils with access to a wide range of electronically stored books. Leaders also encourage pupils to read for pleasure and use the school council as a vehicle for gauging pupils' preferences when ordering new resources.
- Most pupils make good progress in writing, considering their starting points, because teachers structure the learning effectively. For example, pupils show great interest in the chosen themes, such as 'a spooky story', and respond well to each phase of the writing, such as 'building up the atmosphere'. They show effective application of their skills and they can write in an engaging style, using phrases like 'my heart racing in excitement'.
- The broad and balanced curriculum contributes well to providing pupils with a bank of useful knowledge to take forward with them. In science, for example, they learn about the digestive system and different food groups. This supports their understanding of how to be healthy. They prepare well for life in modern Britain with their work in personal, social, health and economic education and in religious education. They learn respect for others' beliefs, for example, and consider the importance of supporting charities.
- When pupils move on from the school, they usually move to a new children's home or back to their local authority. Leaders ensure that pupils understand what to expect from the move, by planning it with them carefully. With the good progress that pupils make in their academic and social development, leaders make sure that pupils are well equipped for the next stage of their educational journey.

School details

Unique reference number	142531
DfE registration number	889/6014
Inspection number	10053737

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Sean Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Diane Wood
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,040
Telephone number	01254 706 525
Website	None
Email address	dwood@caretodayparallelpupils.net
Date of previous inspection	4–6 October 2016

Information about this school

- Lower Pastures School 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 educational 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 special needs and specifically in supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

- Most pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils live at a residential children's home that is owned by the company.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school does not receive pupil premium funding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in lessons, which was a joint activity with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the quality assurance manager for the company. Telephone calls were made to the proprietor, the executive headteacher for the company and social workers who have responsibility for pupils 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, or the pupil survey. The inspector analysed written responses to the staff survey from all three members of staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school, including those available on the company's website. The school does not have website of its own. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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