

Farrowdale House School

Farrow Street, Shaw, Oldham, Lancashire OL2 7AD

Inspection dates

26–28 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Parents recognise the positive changes that the new proprietors have implemented in a very short space of time. They have brought high aspirations for pupils back to this school.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum and make at least good progress in their work, including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' personal development is exceptional, as is their exemplary behaviour. They are reflective and respectful. Leaders promote strong values so that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Teachers set clear expectations for pupils' learning. In key stage 2 particularly, they ask probing questions that extend pupils' thinking.
- Pupils read with confidence, fluency and expression. Younger pupils apply their phonics skills well.
- Leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have made rapid improvements to teaching and learning in a very short time. However, their planning for future developments lack clarity.
- Pupils understand what it means to be a good learner. They support each other and learn well from their mistakes.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in the school are excellent. Pupils are nurtured to become well-rounded individuals.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. However, resources in key stage 1 limit the progress of some of the most able pupils. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils in key stage 1 make rapid progress to cover lost ground. In key stage 2 pupils progress well but they do not have enough opportunities in writing to consolidate their skills and make even better progress.
- Leaders are aware that provision in the early years requires improvement. This is due to prior weak practice in the school. Leaders have already taken steps to rectify some of the difficulties that they have inherited.
- Assessment in the early years is now accurate. Children's welfare and personal development are good.

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 quality of teaching and learning in the early years by ensuring that:
 - children understand what they are learning in lessons so that they can apply their skills in different contexts
 - adults ask questions to prompt children to explore and investigate different areas of learning
 - improved resourcing, especially of the outdoor area, provides adults with the facilities to achieve their aspirations for children’s learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the school’s vision is consolidated into a formal plan for improvements that provides clear milestones so that the proprietors can hold each other stringently to account for school improvement.
- Improve the progress of pupils in writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - pupils have further opportunities to practise their writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum
 - resourcing for mathematics in key stage 1 provides staff with the materials to challenge some of the most able pupils to make even greater progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new proprietors have swept away the stagnation that has previously gripped the school. They have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met and they have set an ambitious trajectory of improvement in a very short time. The proprietors have effectively tackled the weakest teaching and have set an outward-facing philosophy within the school. Staff are extremely positive about the new direction that leaders are setting. Leaders have created momentum by ensuring that staff are receiving opportunities to develop their own practice. Parents are seeing the positive signs of change. One parent commented on the palpable 'excitement for new beginnings'.
- The proprietors manage the performance of staff through monitoring that sets targets for staff to improve their skills. Leaders are adept at identifying areas for staff to improve upon. Staff are motivated to improve their own practice and appreciate the way in which their professional development is being matched to their needs.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Teachers plan exciting topics that engage pupils' interest. There is a clear system of tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Pupils develop skills well through structured schemes of work to achieve high standards. Some individuals make exceptional progress. However, leaders agree that some pupils, particularly the most able pupils, are limited in their progress due to the resourcing of the mathematics curriculum.
- The curriculum is supplemented with a range of clubs. Pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities that they have to learn about other languages, play tennis and participate in the school choir, among others.
- Leaders have established a clear ethos in the school that prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils debate ideas in class, which reinforces their understanding of democracy and other British values such as respect for others. Their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development enables them to relate to others, respecting their differing views, opinions and values.
- Leaders have set a culture across the school that celebrates everyone's unique characteristics. This means that pupils are not inhibited in their learning and feel free to ask questions because of the strong sense of support that they receive from their peers. Pupils' understanding of equalities is well developed because of this pervasive philosophy.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable about their subjects. They have a clear grasp of their subjects and how to improve upon already existing good practice.

Governance

- The new proprietors have breathed fresh life back into this school. They have acted quickly to improve all aspects of the school but concede that has been insufficient time to implement all of the improvements needed.
- The proprietors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, their plans for improvement do not define the detailed targets that would enable them to fully evaluate the effectiveness of their actions to improve the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy is fit for purpose and published online for parents. Leaders understand that, however unlikely, 'it could happen here' and they prepare staff well. Staff have received training and are confident in spotting the signs and symptoms of abuse. They know pupils well and relationships are excellent. This is why pupils say they would feel comfortable in addressing their worries and concerns with staff. Although there are very few incidents, staff remain vigilant. They are aware of a range of factors that could affect pupils at the school.
- Pupils feel safe and they are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of different situations. When online, they know to keep their identities safe and not to share personal information. They understand that staff run fire drills so that they can rehearse evacuating the school. Pupils know that the school site is secure.
- All parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, strongly agree that their child was safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan lessons well. Pupils make swift gains in their learning when teachers ask questions that challenge and probe pupils' understanding. In key stage 2 especially, teachers set clear expectations of pupils so that they have a good understanding of what they are learning.
- Pupils love learning. Their positive attitudes and the relationships they have with staff and each other enable them to challenge each other and work well together. Teachers ensure that pupils understand how to be a successful learner.
- The level of challenge for pupils in mathematics is good and sometimes better. Highly effective practice is evident in key stage 2 as pupils are asked questions that prompt them to reason and think about their answers. In key stage 1, however, classes are not well resourced. This means that the tasks pupils undertake are sometimes not well matched to their learning, such as when pupils complete workbook activities instead of using concrete resources to help them visualise problems. Again, the proprietors have identified this as an area for improvement so that teachers are not limited in their efforts to stretch the thinking of some of the more able pupils. The work in pupils' topic books also shows that they have few opportunities to practise their mathematics skills in some of their topic work.
- Teachers provide clear support for pupils' learning. The feedback from adults enables pupils to understand the misconceptions in their work. For example, in Year 4 pupils are able to explain the mistakes in their calculations and demonstrate how they will learn from this to help them with their work in the future. Pupils commit to improving their own and others' work by helping each other both formally and informally.
- Pupils read with expression and fluency both as part of classroom activities and when reading on their own. Younger pupils apply their phonics well to understand unfamiliar words. They progress well to use a wider range of strategies to understand what they are reading. Pupils have an excellent range of vocabulary and they read texts with

confidence.

- In key stage 1, pupils make rapid gains in their writing, particularly in Year 1. This is due to effective teaching that is filling the gaps in their learning. However, progress for older pupils is not as pronounced because they do not have enough opportunities to write at length to consolidate their skills.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects due to the imaginative and engaging topics that they study, for example in science, where pupils received a visit from a crime scene investigator to help them apply their science skills to investigate a crime.
- Homework is appreciated by pupils, particularly by those in Year 6, who see it as preparation for high school. Parents value this information as it provides feedback on pupils' progress by reinforcing what pupils have studied that week. Parents also appreciate the formal reports and informal comments that they receive on their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the personal development that their children receive at Farrowdale, and with just cause. Parents see their children grow in confidence and self-belief because of the excellent relationships that are fostered by staff. Parents and pupils see themselves as part of the wider family of the school. This results in pupils who are extremely supportive of each other.
- Pupils have, as one parent describes, 'a fundamental respect for themselves and others'. This is because the school celebrates each pupil's differences, where it is 'cool to be you'. The effects of this philosophy are profound. Pupils are unerringly polite and pleasant. There is no arrogance to their self-belief.
- Pupils' consistently positive attitudes ensure that they contribute to their learning without inhibition. This has a positive impact on their progress. Pupils manage their own learning and understand what it means to be a successful learner. Even the youngest children in the early years know that it is good to learn from mistakes.
- Parents attribute pupils' smooth transition to high school to the way in which the staff enable pupils to face fresh challenges and embrace change. This is a journey that starts on the very first day that they arrive at the school and lasts well beyond their time at the school.
- Pupils' understanding of spiritual development is informed by clear teaching of other faiths. Pupils reflect well on the opportunities that they have to visit different places of worship. This promotes their effective understanding of the similarities and differences of others' beliefs.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy and the importance of exercise. Their emotional well-being is at the forefront of everything that the school does. Older pupils actively support the younger ones at playtimes.
- Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when

online. They understand the effects of bullying. However, pupils say that this simply does not happen at school. All parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree with the statement that the school 'deals effectively with bullying'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct in school is excellent. They are a pleasure to talk to and are a credit to the school and to their parents. Pupils' well-developed moral understanding informs their thoughts and actions.
- The school is orderly. Classrooms are small and intimate. Staff ensure that the environment is welcoming. All adults promote excellent relationships with and between pupils.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the behaviour of pupils. There is no disruption to lessons caused by poor behaviour.
- Pupils value their education and attendance is high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils at the school make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics to achieve very high standards. Teachers provide pupils with clear direction and engaging tasks. Consequently, pupils enjoy their work. Attainment by end of key stage 2 is high and the school compares favourably to national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The school also boasts a high success rate of pupils who are offered places at grammar schools, often with scholarships.
- In key stage 2, teachers provide some of the most able pupils with harder mathematics work. These pupils make excellent progress and achieve high standards. However, in key stage 1, some of the most able pupils are not challenged to reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' phonics skills are well developed. They use strategies expertly to decode unfamiliar words. Their range of vocabulary is excellent, which results in very competent, fluent readers.
- Pupils' written work shows that they make very good progress. In key stage 1, pupils make rapid progress in a short space of time to fill the gaps in their knowledge due to highly effective teaching.
- Pupils progress well in the wider curriculum. Their history and geography skills are well developed, as evidenced by the work in their books. Pupils' technological development includes programming using controls, sound, motion and variables. Pupils can read algorithms with ease and can explain the outcomes of these programmes. In physical education, pupils receive clear direction and constant feedback on their performance to ensure that they continually improve their skills.
- Pupils have a thirst for knowledge. Their conduct in lessons is excellent because they are engaged in their learning.
- Parents with older siblings share their views on how their children are well prepared for

the next steps in their education. They believe passionately that pupils fit in well at high school because of the values and personal education that they have received at Farrowdale House. Many pupils go on to successfully study at A level and further education. The quiet confidence and respect for others that are instilled in pupils during their time at Farrowdale are exceptional outcomes that last well beyond pupils' primary years.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The provision in the early years requires improvement because of a legacy of weak performance. This is evident in the current Year 1 pupils' work, which is not at the standard that the outcomes from their early years assessments suggest. The proprietors have identified this and agree that further actions need to be taken to raise the standard of teaching and learning to match that seen in the rest of the school.
- Staff and leaders alike have identified the need for further training for staff to maximise children's opportunities for learning. Adults' interactions with children do little to further their learning or explorative play. The clearly-set expectations for learning seen in the rest of the school are not as evident in the early years. Children do not understand what they are learning and teachers lead their learning rather than promoting their independent thought. Children do not access the range of activities on offer because their learning has not been explained clearly enough. This lack of focus means that progress is not as high as it should be.
- The new early years leader is knowledgeable. She has identified the need to provide appropriate resourcing, particularly to the outdoor area. The curriculum is narrowed by the available resources. This affects the quality of teaching and learning, which does not fully stretch the children's capabilities. The proprietors are committed to developing this aspect of school further.
- Otherwise, children attend a bright environment with dedicated staff who provide high levels of care and support. The proprietors and the early years leader have ensured that all of the independent school standards and welfare requirements have been met. Children are nurtured from the moment they enter the school and parents are rightly proud of the support that staff provide for pupils' well-being and personal development. Safeguarding is a strength.
- Children enter the school with skills that are above those expected of their age and they progress to achieve good standards, although the proprietors feel that assessment has previously been too generous. The inspection evidence also bears this out. However, there are early signs of recovery, such as the accurate assessments that are now in place.
- Parents are involved in their children's education from the outset due to the committed and welcoming staff, who actively engage with parents. Parents appreciate the efforts of staff. Children are motivated and interested learners whose behaviour is excellent. They are a delight. Children make typical progress and some better. However, leaders believe that the potential for early years is still there to be unlocked.

School details

Unique reference number	105747
DfE registration number	353/6014
Inspection number	10034020

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Miss Zoe Campbell and Mrs Suzanne Myrie
Chair	Mrs Suzanne Myrie
Headteacher	Miss Zoe Campbell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,790
Telephone number	01706 844533
Website	www.farrowdale.co.uk
Email address	farrowdale@aol.com
Date of previous inspection	20–22 May 2014

Information about this school

- Farrowdale House School was founded in 1983 as a coeducational independent school for boys and girls between the ages of three and 11 years.
- The new proprietors took over the school at the beginning of September 2017.
- The school does not presently have any pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are presently no disadvantaged pupils in the school.
- The school prepares pupils for entrance examinations to independent grammar schools and was last inspected in May 2014.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed teaching in each class, which included joint observations with senior leaders.
- The lead inspector examined a range of pupils' work in mathematics, writing and from across the curriculum.
- The lead inspector heard pupils read, both individually and during class activities.
- The lead inspector spoke with pupils formally in groups and informally around school.
- The lead inspector spoke with parents and took account of the views of 19 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The lead inspector made observations of pupils' behaviour during lessons, at playtimes and when pupils were moving around the school.
- Meetings were held with the proprietors, middle leaders and teaching staff.
- The lead inspector considered a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and its areas for development.
- The lead inspector looked at attendance and behaviour records and the school's admissions register.
- The lead inspector reviewed safeguarding documentation and considered how this related to daily practice, as well as speaking with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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