

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 December 2018

Mrs Angela Wade
Headteacher
Broadfield Specialist School
Fielding Lane
Oswaldtwistle
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 3BE

Dear Mrs Wade

Short inspection of Broadfield Specialist School

Following my visit to the school on 27 November 2018 with Linda Griffiths, 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 outstanding in January 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the staff are highly aware of the pupils' needs and you meet them extremely effectively. The range of needs has expanded since the previous inspection. A greater number of pupils who have autism and serious medical or physical conditions now attend the school. You make excellent use of the resources that you have, including staff who have specialist training or experience in particular needs or disabilities, to help secure excellent progress for pupils.

You have successfully addressed the area for improvement that inspectors identified in the previous inspection. Leaders have vastly improved the physical environment to meet the growing demands of pupils' needs. The new media block, with its improved equipment and purposeful design, contributes very effectively to pupils' development of their computing skills. There is also a music room, with plenty of instruments, to enable pupils to improve their musical skills, including singing. They put these skills to excellent use in public performances, which also contribute strongly to increasing their self-confidence and independence. The new building for the 16 to 19 provision is well maintained and spacious. There is a dedicated area for staff to provide pupils' personal or medical care, when necessary. Leaders have also very skilfully adapted rooms in the existing building to provide for these growing needs.

You have adapted the learning environment to suit the increasing number of pupils who have autism. You ensure that classrooms meet their needs very effectively, with, for example, screened areas to aid concentration. Your work to ensure that this group of pupils receives excellent support has been externally recognised. The school has recently received the Autism Accreditation Award from the National Autistic Society.

You have also created an activity room to encourage pupils' and students' independent living skills, which makes a strong contribution towards the excellent progress they make in developing their independence. There are further improvements planned, such as the addition of more furniture that is appropriate to a living space, such as armchairs.

You have improved the outdoor space. This has specialist equipment in it, such as a fitness area, which is very effective in developing pupils' motor skills. The outdoor space also provides opportunities for pupils to self-regulate their behaviour, by enabling them to move about and take exercise as calming activities.

You have introduced other features since the last inspection, to provide high-quality education and care for the pupils. In the 16 to 19 provision, for example, you have enabled students to open a shop to sell various artefacts and products created by them, such as sandwiches and greetings cards. This is very effective in supporting the development of their life skills and their readiness for the world of work and adulthood.

Pupils said that they enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and know how to stay safe in a range of situations. For example, they have a very secure understanding of how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils recognise that staff have high expectations of them in terms of their attitudes. Pupils spoke of the great emphasis laid on good manners, for instance. Pupils also have a strong understanding of how to recognise when they feel stressed. This is because teachers have taught them about understanding emotions very effectively and given them strategies to help them to manage their feelings. This contributes strongly to the typically excellent behaviour in school.

There are very few examples of bullying, racism or homophobic incidents. Leaders respond appropriately to those that occur. Management of pupils' behaviour is highly effective. There are members of staff who are trained in techniques to de-escalate any serious incidents of misbehaviour, including physically intervening when necessary. Occasional serious incidents, which arise because of pupils' particular needs, are recorded thoroughly. There have been no permanent exclusions. There have been two fixed-term exclusions recently. There were valid reasons for these and leaders followed appropriate procedures.

The large majority of staff are very positive about the school and their role in it. In response to the staff survey or in conversation with inspectors, they expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the training and support that you and other leaders provide.

Most parents and carers who spoke with the inspection team or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were highly complimentary about the work of the school. They spoke about their children being proud of what they do and about how well staff look after them, making comments such as the school 'feels like a big family'.

There is a positive and productive relationship between the school and the local authority. For example, officers from the local authority with responsibility for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are beginning to use your detailed contributions to pupils' education, health and care plans as a model for their own. The local authority also has an accurate view of the quality of education that the school provides.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The designated lead for safeguarding makes referrals to other agencies when required and follows up issues tenaciously. The school's record of the required checks on members of staff is compliant and thorough.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is very strong. Leaders provide staff with thorough and frequent safeguarding training. Staff have excellent understanding of the various signs of abuse and how to report any concerns about pupils. They also know their pupils and their needs in great detail. This enables them to be especially sensitive to any changes in pupils' behaviour, which could indicate that there is reason for concern. There is also strong communication between school and parents. For example, they make staff aware at the start of each day if their child is upset in any way. They do this either by telephone or by informing the transport providers, who pass on the information to staff. Leaders have also put in place a range of systems, such as the use of Makaton sign language, to help pupils to communicate any concerns.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed certain key lines of enquiry. I have reported earlier in this letter on how successfully you have addressed the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. I have also written about the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned pupils' readiness for the next stage of their education, training or employment. We also explored how effectively the curriculum supports pupils' achievement. Leaders provide a curriculum with a wide range of highly useful learning opportunities that prepare pupils very effectively for the next stage of their journey. Leaders adapt the curriculum to pupils' needs very successfully. For example, some pupils benefit from a well-structured curriculum that is highly effective in responding to their sensory needs, and which secures pupils' excellent progress from their starting points. There is also a strong focus on developing pupils' employability skills. For

example, pupils in key stage 4 have opportunities to discuss in depth how to write an effective curriculum vitae.

- Typically, high proportions of pupils in key stage 4 and in the 16 to 19 provision go on to education, training or employment. You ensure that all pupils leave school with qualifications in English and mathematics, although these are mainly below GCSE level, because of their needs. Nevertheless, you identify pupils who are capable of more demanding qualifications. In recent times, some pupils have achieved a GCSE at up to grade 4 (or grade C) in subjects, such as art and design and mathematics. You provide very helpful careers guidance and ensure that there are opportunities for work experience for all pupils in key stage 4 and in the 16 to 19 provision.
- Pupils' work and the school's assessment information show that current pupils make very strong progress across the curriculum. You ensure that you respond to pupils' interests and strengths, providing programmes of learning at an individual level. You provide challenge for the increasing number of most-able pupils in the school. For instance, you have identified pupils in Year 9 who are adept at computing, who will take an examination at entry level at an earlier point than usual.
- You have identified the need to develop communication strategies to meet the growing range of needs for which the school provides. You have put in place enhanced strategies, such as the use of pictures and other visual cues, to support pupils and enable them to make excellent progress. These are beginning to be very effective.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned pupils' attendance. Typically, the proportion of pupils who are absent or persistently absent is above the most recent national average for mainstream schools. However, it is below the most recent average for similar schools. Furthermore, the proportion of persistent absence is due in large part to pupils with long-term medical needs. You have a range of strategies in place that have been successful in maintaining the rate of attendance at a steady level. These include celebration assemblies to encourage good attendance and early communication with parents of more reluctant attenders. You also constantly seek new ways to reduce pupils' absence and persistent absence. Most recently, for instance, you have identified parents with whom you have begun to work more closely, providing support to help them understand the importance for their children of good attendance.
- The final key line of enquiry concerned leaders' statutory responsibilities. Leaders have now ensured that the school's website is up to date and complies with the government's guidance. Governors challenge leaders very strongly and they ensure that they hold you and the leadership team firmly to account. They know very clearly the school's priorities and the quality of education it provides. They make a substantial contribution to maintaining the high quality of education at the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop new strategies to reduce pupils' rates of absence and persistent absence
- they further develop the enhanced communication strategies in pupils' learning to meet the increasingly varying needs of pupils in the school and sustain the excellent progress that pupils make.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The team inspector and I carried out short visits to classrooms in all key stages, including the 16 to 19 provision. These were joint activities with you and the deputy headteacher. We scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of pupils. We held discussions with senior leaders, other members of staff, governors, parents and pupils. We also spoke with representatives of the local authority. We held discussions on the telephone with headteachers of local schools and with post-19 providers. We analysed the school's own assessment information and a sample of pupils' work. I evaluated 21 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 64 responses to the staff survey. I also analysed 12 responses to the pupils' survey.