

Oswaldtwistle School

Union Road, Oswaldtwistle, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 3DA

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2019

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

- Staff consider that the headteacher has brought 'a breath of fresh air' to the school. Aably helped by the senior leadership team, staff are guided by the belief that every pupil deserves the best chance to succeed.
- Members of the management committee have grown in experience and knowledge. They provide strong support and challenge to leaders.
- Leaders and staff ensure that pupils feel welcome, safe and secure enough to learn.
- Leaders and teachers use information well to match activities to pupils' needs. Most pupils settle quickly and begin to experience educational success. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching and learning are good. Pupils say that teachers make learning interesting. Art and design, citizenship and mathematics are taught particularly well.
- The provision and leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength.
- Leaders and staff have greatly improved the quality of the curriculum, with a much wider range of appropriate subjects available to pupils.
- Individual pupils' attendance is significantly better than when they attended their previous schools.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are a successful part of the school's work. Strong relationships help pupils to develop their self-confidence and to feel positive about their future.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. Where difficulties arise, staff are adept at calming the situation quickly.
- Pupils' reading and writing skills have improved, but they are not at the same high standard as those evident in mathematics.
- Year 11 pupils are offered a good package of information, advice and guidance about their next steps in education. However, pupils in key stage 3 and in Year 10 are not offered similar opportunities to think about their future.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' learning in reading and writing so that the standard of their work in these subjects matches the high quality in their mathematics work.
- Extend the careers curriculum to offer information, advice and guidance to all pupils, including those in key stage 3.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders and members of the management committee have transformed the work of the school since the previous inspection. Together with the whole staff team, leaders have created a school that welcomes vulnerable pupils and works successfully to remove their barriers to learning. Oswaldtwistle School makes a positive difference to pupils' lives.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Firm, supportive boundaries help pupils to feel secure enough to learn. Pupils begin to experience educational success, which helps to restore their self-confidence.
- Leaders make certain that the school actively promotes equality and diversity. Pupils become considerate, respectful and tolerant. Pupils usually work well in each other's company. They have many opportunities to consider the needs of people in the wider community, for example by regularly visiting a care home for elderly people who suffer from dementia. Pupils said, 'It is lovely to see them waiting at the door to greet us' and 'We like to play bingo with them and listen to their stories of the past'.
- The leadership team are experienced and knowledgeable about education. They identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement accurately. Leaders' thoughtful, proactive approach is clear in their detailed school development plan. This outlines precisely how leaders will address those areas needing further attention. Leaders have developed effective arrangements to check and evaluate the impact of their actions on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders use assessment information carefully to analyse pupils' progress. They review each individual pupil's needs, including those that relate to their behaviour and their personal and emotional development.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school's website was not compliant. Leaders have worked hard to create an informative, fully compliant website that gives a positive and accurate first impression of the school.
- Leaders and staff have developed a thoughtful curriculum tailored to the diverse needs of the pupils it serves. Leaders have increased the range of subjects offered by adding subjects such as science, physical education, food technology and caring for children. They have recently added outdoor education to spark pupils' interest and enjoyment. Pupils benefit from a range of activities, including woodland crafts, farming and physical activities such as mountain biking and canoeing. For those pupils that find an individual subject approach difficult, leaders have developed a very effective art-based thematic curriculum.
- The school provides good careers guidance for Year 11 pupils. The curriculum ensures that pupils develop work-related skills and benefit from meeting a range of visitors who talk to them about different careers. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to be ambitious and to explore their aspirations. They help pupils to make informed decisions about how to pursue their goals for the future. For example, pupils with hopes of becoming a lawyer or architect are given a clear steer as to the academic qualifications that they will need. This advice is then supported with opportunities for an appropriate

work experience placement. However, careers information, advice and guidance are not available to pupils other than in Year 11. Pupils in Year 10 and those in key stage 3 do not have opportunities to explore their career options or think fully about their future.

- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded throughout the school's activities. For example, in construction pupils have built bird tables, and in citizenship they are making candle holders. These will be sold to raise funds for local charities. Pupils also learn much by taking part in a range of activities in the local and wider community. They learn first-hand about British values, such as tolerance, respecting differences and the rule of law.
- At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to review the way that they spent the pupil premium funding. Around two thirds of pupils in the school are eligible for this funding. Leaders are now using this money effectively to reduce the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Leaders monitor and evaluate disadvantaged pupils' progress and act wisely when further work is needed.
- The leadership and organisation of provision for pupils with SEND is a strength. This includes thorough identification of pupils' needs. Resources for staff to use with pupils are of a high standard. Leaders use SEND funding effectively. Parents are particularly complimentary about the work of the school's SEND team to meet their children's educational needs.
- Leaders have a clear vision and strategy for the re-integration of pupils back into a mainstream school. Almost all pupils that have been on a short-term intervention placement at Oswaldtwistle have successfully returned to their mainstream school. For pupils who have been permanently excluded, leaders and staff have successfully re-integrated about half of the key stage 3 pupils. Leaders have been less successful with pupils in key stage 4. However, for the first time, they have managed to place some Year 10 pupils in mainstream schools this academic year. The re-integration team work hard to maximise pupils' chances of success. They are always striving to improve on their success rates at both key stage 3 and 4.
- The headteacher is an increasingly influential figure on local secondary school groups and in working with the local authority. She is a strong advocate for supporting pupils at risk of exclusion. She makes sure that Oswaldtwistle provides a second chance for pupils who have been permanently excluded.

Governance of the school

- The management committee is determined to improve pupils' academic, social and emotional outcomes.
- Since the last inspection, the management committee has undergone a review of its effectiveness. Members have been quick to heed advice. Members now use their experience and expertise to good effect. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and provide strong challenge to leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and make an active contribution to the life of the school.
- Members of the management committee are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant with government requirements and fit for purpose. Leaders demonstrate a high degree of expertise in, and knowledge of, all matters relating to pupils' safeguarding and welfare.
- Safeguarding is a high priority at the school. Leaders have made certain that pupils benefit from a safe and secure environment, including by promoting the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Leaders keep detailed safeguarding records. Staff, senior leaders and the management committee undertake regular and appropriate training. This includes training to help them to keep pupils safe from radicalisation, extremism and sexual exploitation.
- The school's safeguarding and welfare support for pupils is excellent. The pastoral team oversees this. Staff carefully coordinate every aspect of the care that is offered to vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Leaders are very aware of the high level of vulnerability of the pupils in their care. Staff are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Leaders' good relationships with other agencies and with parents and carers help to make sure that pupils are safe and that their welfare needs met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leaders and staff have worked successfully to ensure that staff dismantle barriers to pupils' learning. The vast majority of pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Teaching is characterised by warm relationships between staff and pupils. Staff model and reinforce high expectations for pupils' learning and their behaviour. This helps pupils to work with purpose and encourages them to have a good attitude to learning.
- Teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge. This is particularly strong in mathematics, citizenship, art and design, and increasingly in science. Staff use questioning well to challenge pupils and deepen their understanding. Activities are well-prepared, motivating and capture pupils' interest.
- Staff help pupils to be attentive and to focus on their activities. Staff are quick to pick up on those pupils who show signs that they may be struggling. Pupils know that if they are finding a task difficult, that staff will listen and help them until they understand.
- Staff gather detailed assessments about pupils' learning. They know pupils well. Teachers use information precisely to ensure that the tasks which they set are sufficiently well matched to individual pupils' ability and learning needs. This applies equally to pupils who are most-able, disadvantaged and those that find learning difficult.
- The development of pupils' mathematical skills is a high priority in the school. This subject is taught to a high standard. Evidence in pupils' workbooks demonstrates that activities are well matched to suit the aptitude and ability of each individual pupil. Staff

give pupils just the right amount of challenge. As a result, pupils make strong progress in this area.

- Many pupils lack confidence in their reading and writing when they first join the school. Most pupils left their previous school with weak literacy skills. With this in mind, leaders have put in place effective strategies to address these gaps in learning. However, instability in staffing has dulled the intended development of reading and writing. These areas of learning are not of the same high standard as mathematics.
- Pupils said that they enjoy their learning much more than previously. They said this is because teachers 'make lessons fun and interesting' and they 'take the time to explain' information to them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers and other adults take time to get to know pupils and to build strong and trusting relationships with them. This contributes positively to the school's safe, nurturing environment in which pupils gain confidence.
- Staff are skilled at developing positive relationships with pupils, many of whom have faced and continue to face great personal challenges. Most pupils respond positively to the calm and orderly learning environment at Oswaldtwistle School.
- Staff warmly welcome pupils at the start of each day. Teachers and support staff use the time between arrival and the beginning of lessons to ensure that pupils are composed and ready to learn. This makes sure that the school day gets off to a good start. As pupils explained: 'Teachers are nice to you, they listen; you feel that they care about you.' Adults model respectful and caring behaviour in the way that they engage with pupils. This helps pupils to feel relaxed and begin to enjoy school life.
- Staff actively promote the development of pupils' emotional well-being. Pupils' growing self-confidence is clear in their interactions with their peers and adults in school. For example, pupils were unanimous in their condemnation of bullying, saying, 'We don't allow it.' During the inspection, pupils demonstrated a mature level of resilience and patience when they found a new mathematical concept difficult to understand.
- Parents who spoke with an inspector or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, felt that the school has made a positive difference to their children's lives. Parents said that their children are much happier than they were in previous schools. They said they knew this because they 'come home happy and having learned new things every day'. They commented that their children 'felt listened to' and they 'cannot praise the school enough'. All the parents felt that communication between home and school was excellent.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Considering the difficulties that pupils have in managing their own behaviour, pupils conduct themselves well around the school. This

school is a place where pupils feel safe and able to learn.

- Staff manage pupils' movement around the premises carefully, so there is limited opportunity for negative situations to arise. At the same time, adults are mindful of the need to give pupils independence and autonomy. Pupils respond well to this approach from staff and as a result they act responsibly.
- Staff hold high expectations for pupils' behaviour, to which pupils respond well. Pupils are increasingly changing their own behaviour without adult assistance, for example, by stepping away from a situation rather than getting involved. On the occasions when a pupil is in crisis, staff skilfully deal with the incident, helping pupils to calm quickly and be ready to re-join the group. Staffs' clear explanations to pupils leave pupils in no doubt about which behaviours are unacceptable at the school.
- For the small minority of pupils who struggle to follow guidelines and expectations for their behaviour, staff work with them in smaller groups at a second site at the school. The intention is that wherever possible they will re-join the larger groups of pupils at the main school. Many are successful. For the very small minority of pupils, whose behaviour continues to pose a risk to themselves as well as others, staff provide individual support at a third site to better prepare them for learning.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and able to establish a safe learning environment in which pupils conform to high standards of behaviour. Pupils value the support that they receive from staff as well as their measured, caring attitudes.
- Behaviour logs are well kept and regularly analysed by senior leaders and members of the management committee. It is increasingly rare for a pupil to be excluded from school.
- Leaders and staff promote the benefits of regular attendance to pupils and families. Leaders monitor and review pupils' absence meticulously and take action wherever necessary. For pupils who still struggle to attend school regularly, staff give extra help and support, suited to their individual circumstances. This has been particularly crucial, because most of the pupils who attend Oswaldtwistle have had very poor attendance for much of their previous school careers. As a result, most pupils' attendance has improved upon joining the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils often join the school with gaps in their skills and knowledge. This is mainly due to their negative feelings and difficulties in engaging with other people in previous schools. At Oswaldtwistle School, these pupils are now attending regularly and increasingly enjoying their learning. Pupils make good progress over time.
- At key stage 3 and 4, evidence in pupils' books indicates that the vast majority of pupils make good progress over time. Mathematics, citizenship and art and design are the subjects in which pupils achieve best. Although pupils also make reasonable progress in English, this is not as strong as in other subjects. The pupils at Oswaldtwistle find reading and writing particularly challenging.
- An increasing proportion of key stage 3 pupils successfully return to a mainstream school. This success is due, in part, to pupils feeling better equipped academically and emotionally to re-join their peers in a mainstream secondary school. For example,

pupils make noticeable gains in their emotional development and in their ability to make positive choices about their behaviour. This has helped them to feel more positive about school and allowed them to begin to experience success in their learning. 'I have sorted myself out now and feel better about my work,' was a typical sentiment expressed by a number of pupils.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have broadened the key stage 4 curriculum and linked more subjects to awards and accreditation. Creating a package of courses leading to qualifications has raised pupils' self-esteem and confidence in learning. The proportion of pupils entered for GCSE qualifications in 2018 compared to 2017 has doubled in English and mathematics. Science has recently been introduced for the first time. In 2018 all pupils achieved GCSE A to G qualifications and an increasing proportion attained an A to C grade. Pupils also gained qualifications in subjects such as art and design, citizenship, construction, health and social care and caring for children. Parents express their delight in pupils' outcomes, commenting that they had 'never thought [their] children would get a qualification and now they have'.
- There are high expectations for all pupils, including the most able, who are challenged with learning activities that are suitably ambitious. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils are given every opportunity to catch up with their peers. These two groups of pupils make good progress over time. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Over time, this group of pupils also make good progress.
- Leaders and staff have worked closely with Year 11 pupils to prepare them for the next stage of education. They successfully supported all pupils to gain appropriate education, employment or training places in 2018.

School details

Unique reference number	134127
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10057936

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The management committee
Chair	Ian Duerden
Headteacher	Anne Kyle
Telephone number	01254 231553
Website	www.oswaldtwistle.org
Email address	anne.kyle@oswaldtwistle.org
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2016

Information about this school

- The school has one main site. In addition, small groups and individual pupils are taught in two rooms connected to community centres. Another provision caters for pupils with medical needs.
- The school caters for boys and girls who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. In addition, the local authority commissions teaching for pupils with medical needs associated with mental health, who are not attending school. It also commissions places for pupils who are not on roll at a mainstream school.
- Some pupils have an education, health and care plan. Some pupils are undergoing formal assessment for a plan.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium funding is above the national average. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.

- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- A small number of alternative providers are used to complement the education provided by the school: The Alternative School, The Heights Free School, Accrington and Rossendale College and Coal Clough Academy.
- Since the school's previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and the senior leadership team has been restructured. The management committee has also been restructured in the light of an external review of governance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in classes. They also observed pupils' behaviour and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They observed pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in books and considered a choice of case studies.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteachers. They also spoke with members of the pastoral team, curriculum leads and the SEND coordinator. Inspectors also spoke with those responsible for transition, careers, the single central record and attendance.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the management committee, including the chair. She also met with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with some of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils around school and to two small groups of mixed key stage 3 and 4 pupils about their opinions of the school and their learning.
- Inspectors took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and nine responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector also spoke on the telephone with two parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered a sample of school policies and other evidence, including minutes from meetings of the management committee, information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Inspectors also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cole Andrew

Ofsted Inspector

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