

Coal Clough Academy

Swindon Street, Burnley, Lancashire BB11 4PF

Inspection dates

14–15 June 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and managers have created a culture that is built upon the belief that all pupils can succeed no matter what their previous track record. As a result, pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health needs succeed.
- Leaders' actions have brought about significant improvements in the progress made by all groups of pupils in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Leaders have successfully tackled the weaknesses in the predecessor school and there has been a remarkable improvement in standards.
- Governors make a very valuable contribution to the success of the school. They ensure that resources are targeted at areas that will have the most impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders' development planning is not based on a wide enough range of evidence. Plans for improvement and targets are not always sharp enough.
- Pupils who attend Coal Clough have all struggled in mainstream schools. Now, due to good teaching and pastoral support, they make good progress academically and in their personal development.
- Teachers know pupils extremely well as class sizes are small. They encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes and rebuild their confidence so that they can apply themselves and make strong progress.
- Behaviour is good. The majority of pupils conduct themselves well around the school and show respect for each other and the staff.
- Pupils' attendance usually improves dramatically when they are admitted to the school. However, there is still a minority who do not attend as often as they should and this is a barrier to their progress.
- The curriculum is specially adapted to meet the needs of pupils. They benefit from a wide range of subjects, including vocational options. Plans are in place to extend the available resources for learning next year to offer an even wider range of courses.
- Most pupils have not developed the skills in spelling, reading and handwriting that are typical for their age. They make good progress but homework is not always used well to consolidate this learning and allow pupils to practise their skills.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after. Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school and say that lines of communication are very good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to reduce the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school.
- Ensure that homework is used effectively to have a greater impact on improving pupils' spelling, reading and handwriting.
- Sharpen development planning by using all the available evidence on the performance of the school so that more precise targets and plans for improvement can be made.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads by example. She insists that nothing is swept under the carpet and is uncompromising in her ambition for the pupils. Staff have responded by buying into the new culture. They are very optimistic about the future, having seen what has been achieved so far. For example, all the pupils who were engaged in off-site learning, on much reduced timetables, have been brought back into the school.
- The leaders of the multi-academy trust and the local governing body are equally passionate about making a positive difference to pupils' lives by offering them the very best opportunity to succeed. They have made sensible decisions in investing in teaching and learning resources that have improved the breadth of the curriculum. Further investments in science, sport and vocational resources have been agreed for next year.
- Leadership responsibilities are shared across the small but very strong leadership team. Leaders accurately identify the strengths of the school and can articulate very clearly the journey of improvement that they have been on, for example in the improvements made to behaviour, teaching and learning. There is a comprehensive system in place to evaluate the quality of teaching, and this is linked to a focused continuing professional development programme for staff.
- Middle leaders are effective in monitoring the progress of pupils and work well as a cohesive team to ensure that information about pupils is not lost and can be shared to bring about improvement. Staff reflect on the way that they teach and debate the best approaches to help individual pupils learn.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to give key stage 3 pupils access to subjects that will allow successful reintegration into mainstream schools. In key stage 4, there is a wide range of both academic and vocational subjects, such as motor vehicle studies, travel and tourism, and childcare. The key stage 4 curriculum equips pupils well for the choices that they have to make after they leave school.
- The school's enrichment curriculum adds a range of subjects that can be learned for fun. This is a concept that is new to many pupils, who have developed very negative attitudes to learning. Pupils compare their experience here very favourably to when they were in their previous schools. Pupils have opportunities to take part in outdoor activities, go on school trips and engage in work experience. They are keen to earn rewards to gain access to this enhanced curriculum.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to reduce barriers to learning that may be experienced by disadvantaged learners. In particular, it is used to ensure that pupils have full access to the curriculum.
- The school does all it can to promote equality and diversity. A particularly successful example of this was seen in a whole-school assembly when the characteristics of the current England football team were compared with those of the World Cup winners of 1966. Pupils are increasingly proud of their school. They willingly wear the uniform and told inspectors that they were no longer embarrassed to tell others in their community where they go to school.

- There is no sense of complacency among senior leaders and there was general agreement with inspectors about weaknesses that still need to be eliminated. An overarching school development plan is in place, but it does not articulate precisely what the targets for improvement are, the timescales for change and the responsibilities of staff.
- Leaders are very aware that many of the pupils at the school are vulnerable. They have created a culture of vigilance where pupils' welfare is at the heart of every member of staff's work. Staff are trained effectively to identify when a pupil might be at risk of neglect, abuse or exploitation.
- There are appropriate systems in place to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism of any sort. All staff are trained to recognise the dangers of extremism and work effectively with external partners to ensure that pupils are protected. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Governance of the school

- The expertise provided by governors makes a significant contribution to raising standards. They maintain a good balance between supporting and challenging the headteacher.
- The governing body ensures the efficient management of financial resources. Governors have invested well to enhance the quality of teaching and the breadth of the curriculum. For example, much of the school has been refurbished and there has been significant investment in vocational resources.
- The governing body carries out all its statutory duties. Members have a wide range of skills that they use effectively to evaluate the success of the school. However, the school's development plan, which they have agreed with their headteacher, is not based on a wide enough range of evidence. As a result, targets for improvement are not always sharp and easily measurable.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is given the highest priority in the school. Staff and governors undertake frequent and appropriate training. For example, they have an awareness of radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.
- Pastoral support is of a very high standard. All staff, no matter what their status, see the care and welfare of vulnerable pupils and their families as a key part of their role. The support offered is highly valued by parents and carers.
- Leaders make useful contributions to multi-agency meetings where there is a concern for pupils' welfare. Pupils and staff say that the school is a safe and secure environment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are effectively developed and barriers to good teaching are removed. Pupils' previous inability to conform to the expected norms of behaviour in the classroom is much improved and this allows them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers adopt a 'glass half full' approach to giving feedback and take every opportunity to praise even the smallest improvements in learning. They use questioning skilfully to test pupils' understanding and re-shape tasks to allow pupils to succeed.
- The majority of teachers have high expectations. This is particularly the case in key stage 4. Teachers plan learning to suit the individual needs of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are the most able.
- Teachers use baseline assessment particularly well to identify gaps in pupils' learning, and focus on pupils' hobbies and interests as a vehicle for learning.
- Pupils are given time to practise their skills and develop understanding across a range of subjects. There is a strong focus on developing reading, spelling, punctuation and handwriting. However, homework is not used effectively to allow pupils to practise and consolidate these skills.
- Parents receive frequent information about their child's progress at parents' meetings. They appreciate the information that they receive, but expressed a desire that more detailed reports be sent home so that they can support the school and congratulate their children.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. It is seen by the school as the key element that can remove barriers to learning. Teachers and other adults develop strong, trusting relationships with pupils so that they can become more confident learners.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors and those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, expressed praise for the school and the work of the staff. Parents felt that their children were much safer and happier than in previous schools. They said that the change that they had seen in their children was 'fantastic'. They felt that staff understood their children and were dedicated to doing the very best for them. This was typified by the statement: 'My child now jumps out of bed in the morning looking forward to school. In his last school I couldn't get him out through the door.'
- Pupils told inspectors that they liked coming to school and that it was not like being at a mainstream school, which they described as 'grim'. They said that they liked being treated as individuals and that adults were understanding and did not over-react.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are closely supervised by staff as they move around the building. Class sizes are very small. Incidents of poor behaviour are nipped in the bud before they can escalate into serious problems. Staff are skilful at defusing issues because they know their pupils so well.
- It takes time for pupils to settle into the school and it is during this time that they are most likely to test staff and challenge boundaries. Staff respond consistently and make it clear that incidents of very poor behaviour will not be tolerated. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are excluded from the school has declined, but it remains the ultimate sanction. The school has never permanently excluded a pupil and those with short-term exclusions are quickly offered the chance to re-engage in their learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils enjoy learning, particularly in the vocational subjects offered in key stage 4.
- Absence is closely monitored and as a result, attendance has improved, although it remains a barrier to learning for a small group of pupils who are persistently absent. Leaders recognise that this is a key area for improvement and are working hard to find new ways to decrease the number of pupils who do not attend regularly or are on part-time timetables.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes are good for the majority of pupils. Despite having starting points that are usually below average, pupils make good progress in their learning, as inspectors saw from observing learning, examining pupils' work and scrutinising the school's own tracking records.
- Pupils make good progress from a range of different starting points in English and mathematics. In the last two years, all the pupils leaving Year 11 have gained a GCSE or equivalent in English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils make similar good progress to that of their peers.
- Many pupils who enter the school have SEN and/or disabilities. The school is very successful in assessing these needs and adapting teaching and learning appropriately. This contributes significantly to the good progress that pupils make.
- At the end of Year 11, overall attainment is low. However, it shows consistent improvement. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. They attain relevant qualifications that allow them to progress to further education, apprenticeships or training.
- In key stage 3, pupils re-engage with learning and make good progress in developing skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. However, a minority of pupils do not make progress quickly enough in their spelling, handwriting and reading because they do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills. In particular, homework opportunities are limited and do not contribute to improvement in literacy skills.

School details

Unique reference number	142054
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10046629

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

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Des Callaghan
Headteacher	Holly Clarke
Telephone number	01282 421142
Website	www.coalclough.org
Email address	hclarke@coalclough.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Coal Clough Academy is an alternative provision school. It became an academy in September 2015. The school is part of the Education Partnership Trust. When its predecessor school, Coal Clough High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall and to have serious weaknesses.
- Prior to the school's conversion to an academy, pupils were educated on a number of different sites across the local authority. All pupils are now educated at the school apart from a very small number of pupils who attend Burnley College, an alternative provider.
- The majority of pupils have been permanently excluded from their previous school and are now registered at Coal Clough Academy. Almost all have been identified as having behavioural, social, emotional and mental health difficulties. However, almost none of them has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.

- The school offers specialist support for pupils who have additional medical needs.
- A minority of pupils are dual-registered at a mainstream school and attend on a part-time basis or for a limited period of assessment.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average.
- All pupils join the school part-way through key stage 3 or key stage 4.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is extremely low.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes. They observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors also observed pupils during lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books, portfolios, assessment files and case studies.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and middle leaders. They also spoke with the pastoral and business managers and the person responsible for safeguarding checks.
- An inspector met with representatives of the governing body and trust, including the chair. He also met with the chief executive officer of the Education Partnership Trust.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire. Inspectors spoke to a small group of pupils and individual pupils. They also looked at evidence provided by the school of pupils' views.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke to a group of teachers.
- They also took account of the four responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector spoke briefly to a parent on the telephone and spoke to six parents in a meeting.
- An inspector spoke to a headteacher from one of the referring schools and to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including: minutes from meetings of the governing body; information on pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance; and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Andrew Johnson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector

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