

Oulder Hill Community School and Language College

Hudsons Walk, Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 5EF

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although the progress made by pupils in 2016 and again in 2017 was average overall, this masks significant underachievement by several groups of pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils underperformed in 2016. The differences between their achievement and that of their peers widened further in 2017. These differences remain in several subjects for pupils currently in the school.
- Progress is not consistently strong between subjects. Progress in English was well below national averages in 2016 and 2017.
- Teaching is variable. It does not consistently enable all pupils to make good progress. The school's use of appraisal to improve teaching practice is not rigorous enough.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of provision sometimes lacks rigour.
- The behaviour of pupils when unsupervised outside lessons is variable.
- The school is reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions, but in recent years it has permanently excluded too many pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are working hard to improve the quality of teaching and offer teachers frequent opportunities for development.
- In the great majority of lessons, pupils behave well and are willing to learn.
- The school is successfully improving its overall attendance rates, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- Careers education and guidance are good. As a result, very few pupils who left last year are not in sustained education, employment or training.
- Governors are committed and knowledgeable. They hold senior leaders to account robustly.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - using performance data to arrive at a more accurate view of the school’s provision and using this information to develop a strategic approach to tackling key identified weaknesses
 - ensuring that monitoring and evaluation of the school’s provision is robust and consistently managed
 - ensuring that staff at all levels follow agreed procedures consistently and robustly, so that pupils make consistently good progress
 - using performance management more effectively to hold teachers to account for the performance of their pupils.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - ensuring that existing systems to improve the quality of teaching and learning are implemented consistently by all teachers, so that teaching improves and enables students to make the progress that they should
 - ensuring that teachers in all subjects raise their expectations of pupils and routinely challenge pupils of all abilities with suitably demanding work.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - ensuring that expectations of pupils’ conduct are well understood and consistently applied, particularly in unstructured time
 - further reducing exclusions, particularly of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Improve outcomes for pupils, by:
 - developing, consolidating and deepening pupils’ knowledge and skills across the curriculum
 - reducing the differences between the performance of different groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and the most able
 - improving teaching in English so that all pupils achieve their potential in this key subject.

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' strategies to raise achievement have not resulted in sustained, consistent improvement over time. They have had some success in recent years in improving outcomes for certain groups of pupils. However, in some cases, the improvement has been patchy and inconsistent. For example, the school reacted appropriately to poor performance by disadvantaged pupils in 2012 and 2013, with the result that in the following two years this group of pupils improved their achievement considerably. Unfortunately, the performance of disadvantaged pupils fell back again in 2016 and 2017 and the differences between their achievement and that of their peers in school widened further last year.
- Similarly, leaders successfully addressed poor overall performance by high-ability pupils in 2016, so that this group made much better progress in 2017. However, leaders have not succeeded in raising the achievement of lower-attaining pupils to more-acceptable levels.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's provision is overoptimistic. To some extent, this is because their monitoring of the school's effectiveness and the robustness with which they insist on policies being followed sometimes lack rigour. Systems are in place, but are not fully effective. As a result, there is too much variability across several aspects of the school's work. For example, inspectors noted inconsistencies in the management of behaviour and in the expectations that teachers have of their pupils.
- Leaders work tirelessly to improve teaching and learning. They offer teachers a range of suitable professional development opportunities through which to improve their practice. Teachers new to the profession feel well supported. However, these efforts have not yet resulted in consistently good teaching which enables all pupils to make progress. The quality of teaching remains too variable. Partly, this is because leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching sometimes lacks the necessary rigour.
- Leaders and governors sometimes make the decision not to give staff pay increases when their performance does not merit this. However, the school's appraisal process does not always result in necessary improvements in performance, because leaders do not routinely hold teachers fully accountable for the outcomes achieved by their pupils.
- The school has some strong and effective middle leaders. Some subject leaders know their departments well and use evidence from monitoring to improve outcomes further. Most have high expectations of their pupils. Leadership in English and mathematics is improving, following a period of significant staffing instability in recent years in both departments, but is not yet fully effective.
- The school's use of its pupil premium funding appears appropriate. The implementation plan identifies key barriers to learning for pupils and prioritises actions to boost attendance and raise the achievement of the disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders' analysis of 2016/17 spending shows that the school did not meet all its targets for this cohort of pupils. Disadvantaged pupils' achievement fell back again in 2016 and 2017. Pupil premium funding is therefore not having the desired impact.

- Similarly, the school's use of its funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has also had variable impact. Leaders have developed effective systems to identify pupils' needs and for tracking provision for individual pupils. However, leaders need to do more to ensure that they monitor the impact of support more accurately. In 2017, Year 11 pupils who had SEN and/or disabilities made much less progress than was expected and some pupils currently on roll are also not progressing quickly enough.
- Attendance is improving over time. Leaders have taken appropriate action to address poor attendance by some groups of pupils. As a result, the school's overall attendance figure is above the most recent national average and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also improved. Leaders have more work to do to improve the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- In recent years, the school has excluded too many pupils permanently. Permanent exclusions have disproportionately affected pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. So far this academic year, however, no pupil has been permanently excluded, and the school has achieved a significant reduction in the numbers of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion. The headteacher has recently restructured leadership roles to give more weight to behaviour management. Leaders are also using the school's internal support unit, 'The Bridge', to good effect to reduce the number of behavioural incidents.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities, including vocational options. Oulder Hill continues to insist that almost all its pupils study a modern foreign language to GCSE level and it offers them a good range of languages. However, the impact of the overall curriculum is inconsistent: pupils are not yet achieving consistently good outcomes. Further development of schemes of work is needed in some subjects to recognise progression from the primary school curriculum and to take into account national changes to GCSE specifications. The school has begun work to tackle this.
- The school offers its pupils a good range of extra-curricular activities, including arts and sports clubs, musical and dramatic productions and a 'Horrible Histories' club. Pupils are actively encouraged to join these activities, and many enjoy doing so.
- The school has a strong programme designed to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors observed an effective assembly on Remembrance, where pupils were orderly and respectful. The school's wide-ranging coverage in its personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education syllabus helps to create a culture of tolerance for most pupils. Pupils learn about British values such as democracy and the rule of law in their PSHE lessons.
- The school's programme of careers education and guidance is good. Leadership of this area is effective. There are strong partnerships with local employers. As a result of the school's good work in careers, very few of last year's school leavers failed to enter sustained education, employment or training.
- The school works effectively with other schools in the local Rochdale Pioneers' Trust to give its staff external support, for example with moderation of new examination schemes.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed and experienced. They support the school wherever they can and also act as its 'critical friend', by holding leaders and managers firmly to account and asking challenging questions about pupils' progress. Governors regularly review pupil performance data, so they have a sound awareness of where the priorities for development lie. However, in their meeting with the inspector, governors occasionally expressed a view of the school's provision which was a little too positive and did not fully coincide with inspectors' findings.
- Governors are often proactive. Where governors have found practice which they felt needed improvement, they have challenged school leaders to address these issues. For example, when they saw some poor behaviour around school on one of their visits, governors asked senior leaders to intervene. There has since been an improvement in pupils' behaviour.
- Governors support the school effectively. For example, they serve as link governors to departments. One governor told the inspector how she visits her link department, walks through lessons and looks at pupils' work. This gives her a good insight into the work of the department.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's finances. They check that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is used appropriately. They acknowledge that the performance of disadvantaged pupils is not yet good enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The school's safeguarding policies and practices are robust. Leaders actively promote a culture of vigilance where pupils' safety and welfare are paramount. Safeguarding and child protection are high priorities.
- The leadership of safeguarding is strong. The designated senior leader understands the local community and extends his role beyond the school gate to keep children safe. The school has rigorous checking procedures in place for child protection. All staff, including non-teaching staff, have been trained in safeguarding and child protection. They are confident about making referrals. Any concerns reported are followed up meticulously by staff. Record-keeping is exemplary. The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to keep pupils secure and safe from harm.
- Inspectors investigated a case of some boys who had been excluded. School records show that these pupils sometimes go missing from home. However, leaders demonstrated that they had followed the agreed local procedures closely in managing this case.
- Staff have had training on 'Prevent', the government's programme for preventing radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example online. The school has filters in place to prevent inappropriate internet usage.

- Governors are suitably trained in safeguarding and in the safe recruitment of new staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent. Despite leadership's best efforts, too much teaching does not enable all pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Inspectors observed several lessons where levels of challenge for some pupils were not high enough. Teachers often miss opportunities to stretch and challenge pupils, or to deepen and consolidate their learning, for example through extended questioning.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work, both in lessons and in the separate sample provided by leaders, revealed mixed results. Some pupils are being challenged and are producing good-quality work over time, for example in many of the English books seen. However, other pupils do work which is not good enough, including some of the most able pupils. Inspectors saw several examples of books where little effort or care had been taken or where pupils left work unfinished. Teachers do not consistently address these faults.
- In the most effective teaching, pupils are challenged at high levels and teachers use modelling and questioning well to promote learning. Teachers often demonstrate strong specialist knowledge of their subjects. For example, in a Year 10 art lesson, the teacher prompted the pupils to improve their work by asking them questions and encouraging them to reflect on their learning. In a Year 7 history lesson, pupils were asked to consider a challenging source based on the mediaeval church, and in a Year 8 technology lesson, pupils demonstrated good analytical skills when developing their initial ideas.
- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is inconsistent. Senior leaders confirmed that some examples noted by inspectors did not meet the school's marking policy. Not all teachers routinely correct key spellings in pupils' work, which sometimes leads to pupils continuing to make the same mistakes later.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make inconsistent progress, as teachers' expectations of the quality of work they should produce vary. One pupil told the inspector that, 'Some teachers never mark my work. This makes me angry.' Others, however, were much more positive, citing the good support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Most teachers manage behaviour well. The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons and are ready and willing to learn.
- The school encourages pupils to read widely. Every day, the learning resources centre is very well used by pupils and is very busy, for example at lunchtimes. Many use the facility to work on computers. Others socialise with their friends or borrow games to play. Several pupils also spend the time reading quietly. Some told the inspector that they regularly take books out. Pupils whom the inspector listened to reading all read confidently. The school uses a recognised commercial scheme to boost pupils' reading ability and extend the range of books they read.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- In response to their concern about burgeoning lateness figures, leaders recently established new systems by which to sanction pupils who arrive late for school. The immediate impact of the new approaches is yet to be felt. Punctuality remains in need of further improvement.
- Inspectors saw a number of pupils arriving for school on their bicycles who were not wearing cycle helmets.
- Pupils mostly feel safe in school, and they know how to stay safe. However, inspectors noticed some potentially dangerous tomfoolery on congested stairwells. Pupils know how to protect themselves from radicalisation and from exploitation and how to stay safe online.
- Most pupils who met inspectors said that there is little bullying and that, if it occurs, staff deal with it promptly. However, a small minority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire were not convinced that the school deals with bullying effectively. Pupils confirmed that there is little racist or homophobic behaviour.
- The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that their children are well cared for and receive good support. Again, a small minority of parents disagreed with this view. Inspectors met some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who feel they do not get enough attention from some teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- There are inconsistencies in the management of behaviour around the building. Most pupils behave well around school at breaks and lunchtimes, and when moving between lessons. However, inspectors heard a lot of swearing. Some pupils who met inspectors said that behaviour during the inspection was better than it is usually. Pupils drop a lot of litter.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and most are courteous and respectful. Most have positive attitudes to learning and their positive behaviour ensures that there is little disruption of learning. However, some pupils in some subjects are allowed to present poor-quality or unfinished work.
- Leaders are successfully reducing the numbers of fixed-term exclusions, which have fallen by 50% since 2014. New behaviour management systems, allied to good cooperation with local schools and effective use of the internal withdrawal facility, 'The Bridge', are all having a positive impact on reducing exclusions. However, in recent years, Oulder Hill has permanently excluded too many pupils. The figure is several times higher than the national average. The great majority of the permanent exclusions have been for disadvantaged pupils or pupils who have SEN and/or

disabilities, which means that these pupils are disproportionately affected. So far this year, there has been a welcome improvement, as the school has not excluded any pupil permanently this academic year.

- Although attendance figures dipped at the end of 2016/17, attendance over time is improving and is above the most recent national average. The school is successfully raising the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils, but the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities declined last year and remains in need of improvement.
- Overall figures for persistent absence are close to national averages, but figures show that the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, the school's pupils made progress that was in line with national averages from starting points which were slightly above average. In 2017, early indications show that the school's Progress 8 score (the new national measure by which secondary school performance is assessed) remained close to national average, with a year group of average ability. The percentages of pupils attaining standard and good passes at GCSE in both English and mathematics were close to national averages in 2017.
- In both years, however, these positive figures mask significant underachievement by some groups of pupils and in some subjects. Pupils' progress in English in both 2016 and 2017 was well below average. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities made progress which was much lower than average in both years. In 2016, boys, and especially the most able boys, performed poorly in several key subjects.
- The school had positive success in raising the achievement of its disadvantaged pupils in 2014 and 2015, but the performance of this group then fell back again, which shows that the school's long-term strategies are not effective in sustaining improvement. Disadvantaged pupils underperformed in 2016 and the differences between their achievement and that of their peers widened further in 2017. These differences remain in several subjects and year groups for pupils currently in the school.
- Subject performance, as suggested by the school's own tracking information, is uneven. In history, for example, pupils are currently achieving poorly in every year group. In science, pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 have low progress scores at present, and the same is true for Year 10 pupils in geography. However, evidence suggests that improving teaching and new leadership in English will make a positive difference to English outcomes this year. Improvement is also expected in mathematics and in French, both of which had disappointing outcomes last year.
- Inspectors' evidence gathered from lessons and from a scrutiny of pupils' work did not paint a strong enough picture of consistent, sustained improvement. In too many cases, teaching is not challenging pupils sufficiently, including the most able pupils. Inspectors were therefore not convinced that the improved progress made by the most able cohort in 2017 will be sustained with current pupils.

- The progress made by pupils with SEN and/or disabilities currently on roll is inconsistent. This cohort performed poorly in both 2016 and 2017 and wide gaps still persist in key stage 4.
- The school's literacy programme and its use of Year 7 catch-up funding are having a positive impact on literacy levels. However, the development of numeracy is in its infancy and not enough is being done to support the numeracy needs of the weakest pupils.
- The school is preparing most of its pupils effectively for the next stage of education, employment or training. Pupils leaving Oulder Hill in 2017 obtained GCSE grades in English and mathematics commensurate with those achieved nationally. Very few pupils failed to enter sustained education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	105840
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10037775

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zakaria Al-Hassani
Headteacher	John Watson
Telephone number	01706 645522
Website	www.oulderhill-school.com
Email address	schoolinfo@oulderhill.com
Date of previous inspection	17–18 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about equalities objectives and the use of catch-up premium funding on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It admitted a large number of new pupils in 2016/17.
- The school has a larger proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities than is found nationally. The majority of pupils are White British. The next biggest grouping is of Pakistani heritage pupils. The school also has small populations of pupils from a diverse range of other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high compared to national figures.
- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged is higher than the national average.

- The overall proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is also higher than the national average.
- In 2016 and in 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11.
- The school is a member of the Rochdale Pioneers' Trust, which enables local schools to cooperate together for professional development and to share good practice.
- The school does not use any external alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons. They visited form time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised a sample of work provided by senior leaders. Inspectors listened to a small group of pupils reading.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents. These included: the school's internal data which tracks pupils' achievement; development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of governing body meetings; school policies; safeguarding procedures; and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website to check if it met requirements.
- The team took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the 16 free-text responses received from parents. Inspectors also took account of the 71 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Tracey Greenough	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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