

Inspection of The Brian Clarke Church of England Academy

Bloom Street, Oldham OL9 6BP

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Allison Ash. This school is part of the Cranmer Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Julie Hollis, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Janet Gregory.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an extremely welcoming school. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and rooted in high levels of care. As a result, pupils feel happy and safe.

Pupils learn the importance of being kind and respectful to others through faith events and culture days. This helps to promote a strong sense of belonging and community cohesion. It prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour routines are clearly established. Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They learn in a positive and calm environment without disruption. They are extremely polite to visitors and one another. They are highly committed to their learning.

The school's expectations of pupils' achievement are high. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and aspirational. Most pupils respond well to these high expectations and excel. In the main, pupils benefit from a carefully designed curriculum that prepares them well for their next stage in education.

The school's values underpin every aspect of its work. For instance, pupils value taking part in sporting events and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They cherish opportunities to expand their skills and interests through clubs, such as Ancient Hebrew and 'poetry by heart'. Pupils enjoy singing in the choir, particularly when performing in nursing homes or school plays. This helps them to build their confidence.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the school opened in September 2022, leaders at all levels, ably supported by the trust, have worked with determination to enact their vision and secure their ambition for pupils' success. Despite the challenges posed by the addition of new classes and the appointment of a considerable number of staff, the school has ensured that pupils receive a good quality of education that prepares them well for their next steps in education.

Established and new staff are supported very well through a range of highly appropriate professional development. This ensures that they understand the school's way of working and its policies and procedures. The trust works closely with the school to make sure that its continual growth is managed carefully without placing a burden on staff's workload. Staff feel extremely well supported and appreciate the strategies that promote their well-being.

The school has worked with the trust to design a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. The school prioritises literacy and academic rigour through its curriculum. This ensures that pupils are equipped to learn the curriculum. It also means that they develop resilience, independence and a desire to study.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to design effective learning activities. They explain new subject content clearly. In most subjects, this supports pupils to deepen their knowledge well over time.

Most teachers check pupils' understanding and correct misconceptions quickly. Teachers' checks within lessons help pupils to revisit prior learning before moving on to new learning. However, this practice is not consistently secure across subjects and year groups. Consequently, from time to time, some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they could.

The school has secure systems in place to identify and meet the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff tailor learning activities effectively so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum well.

The school prioritises reading. It has established deep-rooted routines to check pupils' reading knowledge. This helps staff to shape their support to remedy the gaps in pupils' reading skills. Consequently, pupils develop confidence and fluency in reading. Most pupils enjoy reading widely and often.

Pupils' behaviour is of the highest standard. They live up to the school's 'STAR' expectations and are highly engaged in lessons. Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly, and absence rates are low. Their positive attitudes to learning permeate the school. This creates a focused environment where pupils flourish and enjoy learning together.

Pupils relish the exceptional programme that promotes their personal development. For instance, pupils develop a mature understanding of personal safety, including offline and online risks through the 'well-being' curriculum. They also benefit from a rich range of leadership opportunities. For example, pupils embrace roles such as Prime Minister, subject ambassadors and house leaders with enthusiasm. This helps to equip pupils with skills for future success. The school offers a rich and well-considered careers programme. For example, pupils attend careers fairs and take part in workshops to gain a strong understanding of different career routes. Pupils are very well prepared to become positive citizens in modern society.

The trustees and members of the local governing committee review and check that the school's actions are in the best interest of pupils. They monitor improvement work carefully. This helps them to ensure that the quality of education is of the highest standard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasions, the checks that are made on pupils' learning do not identify gaps in their knowledge. This means that pupils move on to new learning before they are ready.

This hinders them from building their knowledge securely. The school should ensure that assessment information is used effectively across the curriculum to support pupils to know more and remember more.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	149137
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10378036
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	717
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janet Gregory
CEO of the trust	Julie Hollis
Headteacher	Allison Ash
Website	www.brian-clarke.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2022. At the time of the inspection, there were only pupils in key stage 3.
- The school is part of the Cranmer Education Multi Academy Trust.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
- There have been considerable changes to the staffing and governance of the school as the pupil population has grown each year.
- The school uses two registered and one unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is a Church of England academy in the Diocese of Manchester. The first section 48 inspection is due to take place by 2026.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the CEO of the trust, the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local governing committee and trustees, including the chair of governors and chair of trustees. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during social times and during movement around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders and looked at pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for personal development, pupil premium, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, early careers teachers, careers, SEND and reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including school's self-evaluation, attendance and behaviour records.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses of parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

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