

Rossendale School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI
Social care inspector	Christine Scully

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Rossendale School is an independent day and residential special school for 68 students aged from seven to 16 years. The school opened in May 1989. There are currently 63 students on roll, of whom eight are in Key Stage 2, with the remainder in Key Stages 3 and 4. The students come from 16 local authorities in the north-west of England, seven of whom reside at the school during the week. The residential accommodation comprises of two separate houses, a short distance from the main school, which is located on the western edge of the Pennine Moors, close to Bury. All students have a statement of special educational needs linked specifically to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and/or other learning difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Prior to starting at the school, the students have a history of severe disruption to their education caused, primarily, by poor attendance and challenging behaviour. The school aims to promote 'a positive, supportive and achieving culture to help create a good school' by 'focusing on students' awareness of moral values and the capacity for enjoyment.' It further aims to 'build on these values and empower young people to achieve as much independence as possible, so that they can approach adulthood as active and responsible contributors to society.' The school's education provision was last inspected in June 2008, and its boarding provision in January 2011. This was an integrated inspection of both the education and residential provision.

Evaluation of the school

Rossendale School provides an outstanding and continually improving quality of education for its students. The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection, and it continues to meet its published aims very successfully. The school's safeguarding procedures in the school and residential accommodation

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

meet all statutory requirements, and contribute positively to the outstanding provision seen in the welfare, health and safety of the students. Good quality teaching, combined with an outstanding quality of care and support in all aspects of the students' lives at the school make for a very positive work ethos, within which the students make outstanding overall progress in their academic and personal development. The overall effectiveness of the residential experience is outstanding. The school meets all the regulations for independent residential special schools, including all of the national minimum standards and associated regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. All required areas of learning are taught within a framework of National Curriculum subjects. The overall balance and programming of separate subjects is very good. The school has a detailed and well-planned provision to develop key literacy and numeracy skills for all students, which is supporting very effectively their work and achievements across all curricular areas. The emphasis on acquiring and developing these key skills is making a valuable contribution to the students' confidence to engage willingly in reading, writing and speaking activities; the latter of which are seen in whole-class plenary and small group activities in lessons. The school makes excellent use of external visitors to enhance its curricular provision. For example, during some recent work on local democracy, the Mayor and other local council officials visited the school to talk with and challenge the students' understanding about their rights and responsibilities within the local community. The combination of all these curricula experiences makes a significant contribution to the students' personal, social, emotional and intellectual development, and underpins the outstanding overall progress being made by the students. The additional curricular opportunities provided for residential students greatly enhance their overall learning and personal progress in school. The provision for the development of independent learning skills enables the residential students to gain high levels of confidence to tackle and successfully achieve a range of 'life skills', geared to help them as they move towards adulthood.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment are good overall, with some outstanding features. The focused teaching throughout the school is based on secure and outstanding working relationships within which the students are challenged to make progress in their attendance, behaviour and attitudes, alongside improved academic progress. The quality of teachers' planning is good and characterised by detailed lesson content, which targets both the whole class and individual students, and very effective use of the students' individual education plans. There is regular recording of students' progress in all subjects taught, but there is some inconsistency in the type of information collected, which limits its overall usefulness for monitoring students' progress and setting clear targets for their future achievement. For example, some subjects use National Curriculum levels to describe attainment, while others use letter grade descriptors that have no clear reference to the National Curriculum content being taught. Teachers' marking is consistent and in many subjects reaches an excellent quality because of the detail provided about the standard of students' work, and the areas that could be improved upon further. The

quality of further support for those in the residential accommodation is exceptionally well focused and helpful to the students' all-round personal development. The productive links between school and residential staff are helping to ensure a consistency of approach and support for these students, which is helping them to enjoy school and achieve very well.

The students' achievement by the time they leave the school is good in relation to them gaining formal accreditation. However, when combined with the students' significantly improved attendance and behaviour, their overall personal and academic progress is outstanding.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students are outstanding. The students' behaviour is outstanding, and exemplified by their careful listening in lessons, their enthusiasm to engage in question-and-answer sessions with teachers and their peers, and in the commendable ability of the overwhelming majority to show tolerance and respect for others. Residential students are developing an understanding of their own behaviour and the impact that their actions may have on others. The students are particularly proud that they are now able to manage any anger outbursts, which they credit to the support of all staff in both the school and residential homes.

These aspects underpin the excellent relationships seen in every aspect of the students' lives at the school. As a result, the students are developing their self-esteem and personal confidence and, because they are experiencing many personal successes, which for many is a 'first' in their educational career, their social awareness is growing which is helping them to understand and appreciate their own strengths and weaknesses. Staff are very skilled at supporting, reinforcing and challenging, when necessary, aspects of the students' moral and social development. The students know clearly the difference between right and wrong, with the overwhelming majority able to work very successfully as individuals, and in different types of work groups. Teachers and support staff are very adept at using praise to encourage and motivate the students to give of their best. This is helping the students to develop their sense of self worth because their efforts are recognised and celebrated verbally, and in written comments in workbooks. The attendance of the students is excellent overall. The range of formal and informal learning opportunities, in and out of lessons, on citizenship and personal, social and health education are enabling the students to develop an informed view of the law, public services and how democracy gives an emphasis to their rights and responsibilities outside of school. The school and residential homes are very active and successful in canvassing and promoting the students' views and opinions about all aspects of their lives at Rossendale School.

Residential students also have excellent opportunities to develop their independence and self-help skills, for example, by travelling to and from local sport facilities on their own, and in shopping for essential day-to-day food items, and in taking

responsibility for a variety of different 'home tasks', such as washing the dirty dishes after a meal. These varied opportunities are helping the students to develop their understanding and appreciation of life both in and outside of the residential homes, and to link with and appreciate how others live their lives in the broader community. Additional links with local charities are also helping the students to appreciate that they can contribute to the lives of others, whose needs may be greater than their own, and who may be far less fortunate than themselves.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's measures to promote the welfare, health and safety of its students, including child protection, are outstanding. Procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of students are very well known. They are adhered to by all staff, with appropriate training opportunities to keep up-to-date with current legislation and practice relating to safeguarding in the school and in the residential homes. The supervision of students is excellent and is always achieved within a calm and well-controlled atmosphere. The students respond exceptionally well to the support and guidance provided and, as a result, they know very clearly what is expected of them at all times. The safety and welfare of students is of paramount importance to residential staff. Care plans and risk assessments identify clearly the uniqueness of each residential student, and their healthcare needs are exceptionally well met. For example, with an appointment with the child and adolescent mental health team, relevant counsellors or other healthcare professionals.

Residential students have a secure understanding of their own personal needs and those of others, and they show compassion for their peers who are not able to participate in certain activities due to an injury. Although residential students receive their prescribed medication on time, there are inconsistencies in the recording of this. Highly effective de-escalation techniques are employed by staff, which means there is minimal use of restraint or for the need to impose sanctions. Both school and residential students are able to participate in regular activities, which are helping them to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. School lunches and meals in the residential homes give a high prominence to eating healthy foods. The school's policies on safeguarding, anti-bullying, first aid and health and safety are compliant with the regulations. The school promotes the general well-being of its students very well through its personal, social and health education programme. Residential students say bullying is not an issue for them, and they have confidence that staff will address any concerns they may have. Residential staff rotas are designed to promote consistency in caring and safeguarding the students, and this works exceptionally well in practice. Risk assessments in the residential homes are reviewed on a regular basis and effectively encompass the changing needs of the young people. Students throughout the school, including those in residence take an active role in keeping themselves safe. Off-site risk assessments are also sufficiently robust. Fire safety checks comply with the regulations, and the students, especially in the residential homes, talk knowledgeably about fire evacuation procedures. The school meets fully its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The single central register contains all the information necessary to ensure that the required regulatory checks have been carried out on all staff who work with or care for the students.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school meets all the regulations. The school comprises of three separate buildings, which provide general classrooms and separate specialist teaching areas; the latter includes accommodation for design and technology, science, food technology, information and communication technology, music and physical education. All classrooms are of a suitable size for the age and number of students on roll. There is an outdoor carpeted area, which is in good condition and is suitable for outdoor play and a limited number of sports. There is a good range of toilets and washbasin facilities, all of which are easily accessible for students of different ages. The buildings are in excellent condition and are structurally sound. There is a kitchen, which serves hot lunches and which has met all requirements from the local environmental health department. The residential students enjoy very caring and homely accommodation. The two houses are well maintained and there is an ongoing programme of improvement, which begins each school holiday. Residential bedrooms are personalised and reflect the individual tastes of the students.

Provision of information

The school meets all the regulations in its provision of information for parents and carers. The school brochure contains a range of helpful information, including detailed overviews about the ethos and aims of the school, the curricula provided, the manner in which the staff will support the students, both academically and, when needed, in their personal, social and emotional development. Additional information is also sent out to parents and carers, in which it is made explicit what policies are made available, on request.

The parents and carers report that they are very pleased with the regular information they receive from the residential homes and the school, which is helping to ensure a greater consistency of care for all students. Parents and carers are able to contact the residential staff at any time to discuss any concerns they may have, as also are the staff, if any students are experiencing a problem that needs further discussion with parents or carers. Information about residential students is comprehensive and is stored securely in order to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The procedures for handling complaints comply fully with the regulations. There are effective systems in place to manage complaints for residential students, although

they say very forcibly that they do not feel the need to do so because there is always a member of staff with whom they can talk, if the need arises.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. There are clear aims for residential care, which are very effectively translated into practice. These aims are clearly understood by all staff, and the parents or carers of the residential students. All care staff have, as a minimum, a level three qualification in childcare, and all have very good opportunities to gain further qualifications. Staff are passionate about what they do and are highly committed to meeting the needs of all residential students. The residential provision is exceptionally well managed. The head of care ensures that all staff have a clear role and range of responsibilities, and that all students have a say in the quality of care that is provided for them. The students report that they feel valued and that they are part of a residential family. High staffing ratios ensure that the students' needs are exceptionally well met. Students are fully supported in the homes and when they are involved in activities outside of the accommodation. There is an extensive range of activities each evening, which is meeting the varying needs of all students. However, the students do not have access to the internet, to aid their personal research for homework tasks. There are very effective links between the care and school staff, which means that they provide a secure wrap-around level of support at all times. All personal records are exceptionally well maintained, and give a very clear emphasis to the uniqueness of each individual student. There are very effective systems for evaluating the quality of the residential provision, and there is open and regular dialogue with the students, parents and carers, and staff to evaluate fully how provision can be improved further. Parents and carers praise the residential staff for providing a rounded education and a secure and safe living environment, in which their children are making excellent all-round progress in their social, emotional, behavioural and academic development. As a result, the residential students say they feel valued because staff take their views seriously and act upon them as quickly as possible.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').⁵

National minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated regulations.

⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Improve the consistency of the assessment information collected across all subjects taught, as an aid to monitoring students' progress more effectively, and in setting clear targets for their future achievement.
- Develop a safe and secure system for the residential students to have access to the internet, as an aid to improving the quality of their personal research for school-based work.
- Ensure clarity and consistency in the recording of all prescribed medication for residential students.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	√			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning	√			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	√			
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Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	√			
Outcomes for residential pupils	√			
Quality of residential provision and care	√			
Residential pupils' safety	√			
Leadership and management of the residential provision	√			

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and also learning difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorder		
Date school opened	May 1989		
Age range of pupils	7 –16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 57	Girls: 6	Total: 63
Number of boarders	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 57	Girls: 6	Total: 63
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 6	Girls: 3	Total: 9
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,127 – £93,750		
Annual fees (boarders)	£46,239 – £130,500		
Address of school	Bamford Road Ramsbottom Bury Lancashire BL0 0RT		
Telephone number	01706 822779		
Email address	rossendale@priorygroup.com		
Headteacher	Mr D Duncan		
Proprietor	The Priory Group		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



03 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Rossendale School, Bury, BLO ORT

I am writing this letter on behalf of the inspectors who recently visited your school. I should like to thank you for the way you behaved, and the response you gave to me and my colleagues when we spoke with you. We enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and residential care staff, and we really appreciated the way you were willing to talk about the different things you do at school and in the residential homes.

We hope that you and your parents or carers enjoy reading the following, in which we summarise our main findings from the inspection.

- The quality of education at Rossendale School is outstanding.
- From a starting point at the school where all of you have experienced severe disruption with your education, every one of you makes outstanding progress in your emotional, social, behavioural and academic development - well done to you all.
- The range and quality of the subjects taught are outstanding, and teaching and assessment (the information about how well you are doing in school) are good. We are, however, asking that the school collects the information about your progress in all subjects in a way you can understand.
- All staff work exceptionally well to create a learning atmosphere in which you gain a number of personal successes.
- The working relationships throughout the school and residential homes are excellent.
- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding.
- Most of you said you enjoy school, although a small number felt that the behaviour of some could be better.
- The inspector who visited the residential homes was extremely impressed with your attitudes and with the way you get on so well with staff and other students.

We hope that you continue to enjoy attending school and that you achieve all that you and your parents or carers would wish for the future.

Brian Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector