

# The Robert Ogden School

Independent school standard inspection report

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|-------------------------------|---------------------|
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| Inspection number             | 386882              |
| Inspection dates              | 22–23 November 2011 |
| Reporting inspector           | Honoree Gordon HMI  |

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

The Robert Ogden School is a special school for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are on the autistic spectrum. It is owned and run by the National Autistic Society. A number of students have additional difficulties and more complex needs. The range of students' cognitive abilities varies and, increasingly, students' needs and behaviour are at the more challenging end of the autistic spectrum. For several students, their previous school placement has not proved suitable.

The school is located in a semi-rural area near Barnsley and opened in 1977. It is registered for up to 165 students aged from seven to 19 years of age. As the provision for including students with autistic spectrum conditions in mainstream schools has increased, the school roll has fallen. There are currently 80 students on roll. Half of the students are over the age of 16. The majority of students are boys. All students have a statement of special educational needs. These are funded by 17 local authorities, mostly in the north of England. Many students reside in one of two of the Society's residential units nearby, but others arrive on a daily basis. One quarter of students are looked after by the local authority and have a 52-week National Autistic Society residential placement.

The aims of the school include promoting understanding and appropriate provision for autism, thereby enabling students to achieve. The school was last inspected in November 2008. Inspections of the two National Autistic Society residential units took place in September and October 2011 and separate reports were written at that time.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The quality of education at The Robert Ogden School is outstanding. The school successfully meets its aims, providing an environment in which young people feel at ease and are enabled to make outstanding progress in their learning. The quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment are all outstanding. The curriculum is highly personalised so that it meets individual students' needs exceptionally well. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and there are highly

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

robust systems to safeguard students. The school meets all but one of the regulations; the remaining regulation relates to the provision of information and the school has measures in place to address this issue. The school has made good improvement since its previous inspection in November 2008.

## **Quality of education**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. Students from Key Stage 2 onwards follow the National Curriculum, with suitable adjustments made in how work is planned and adapted for each student in making provision for their particular needs and pace of learning. As a result, there is a calm and productive atmosphere for learning and students make outstanding progress over time. Students who cannot yet access learning in the classroom follow an individualised curriculum which is closely related to their interests and capacities. This is delivered in a well-resourced inclusion unit with a view to students' eventual re-integration, over time, into the classroom.

The curriculum is broad and well balanced. The core curriculum in all key stages comprises English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education, personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship and religious education. In Key Stage 4 students choose from a wide range of optional subjects, reflecting their interests and aptitudes, including GCSE and vocational courses. The curriculum for all pupils focuses strongly on developing good listening skills and on helping students to communicate their needs and what they know and can do. Students effectively learn communication skills, using symbols and gestures where needed. Students gain a good range of suitable qualifications for learning, including units of accreditation from the Association of Qualifications Alliance (AQA), and life skills courses accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).

The curriculum for post-16 students is geared principally, and highly appropriately, towards preparing them for the next steps in their lives. The curriculum balances very effectively the promotion of independence with developing further students' key skills in numeracy and literacy. The post-16 setting successfully retains a distinct identity, befitting students in this age range.

Two innovative features of the curriculum stand out: the sixth form café, where students can undertake a structured programme of work experience and work-related learning, and the enrichment programme. The latter brings together students across the age range every day to take part in new activities or to follow their interests. This programme offers a wide choice of enjoyable activities such as a percussion group, ICT club, and therapeutic hair and beauty sessions. Wherever possible, these activities enable accreditation of the skills and learning acquired. The curriculum is suitably challenging while being accessible, drawing on additional specialists as appropriate. The development of sensory awareness features in lessons, but resources for the sensory and therapeutic curriculum are not extensive and are mostly focused on the few students whose needs are greatest. The school

recognises that the sensory curriculum could enhance the well-being and enjoyment of more students and has appointed an occupational therapist to support this development.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Subjects are taught by specialist teachers, who draw on an extensive range of methods, including the highly effective use of ICT, to engage students and stimulate their learning. Teachers' planning for lessons includes a wide range of activities and tasks that are well-paced and very well suited to meet the needs of individual students. As a result, students are willing to learn.

In the best lessons, students concentrate very well and are encouraged to work independently for short periods of time. Students are given choices about how to approach tasks and encouraged to organise themselves, such as in a Key Stage 4 food technology lesson, in fetching and mixing ingredients for a Christmas cake. In an ICT lesson students with very limited oral communication skills demonstrated their understanding and contributed very well to a presentation about school, in writing suitable captions to photographs they had taken.

All lessons have clear aims, with appropriate personalised targets for each student. With the aid of symbols and pictures, students and staff together review individual learning at appropriate points in the lesson. Students' progress is closely tracked across all subjects. Students' personal files are exemplary in detailing their needs, suggested teaching approaches and strategies for managing their behaviour, and recording data about progress made toward targets. The use of assessment is much improved since the previous inspection. Teachers use assessment information particularly well to guide students' future learning.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding and is at the heart of the school's work.

The personalised curriculum fosters students' personal development extremely well. This ensures that students enjoy school, which is reflected in their good behaviour and attendance. Many parents and carers commented in their questionnaire responses on their children's happiness and behaviour having been transformed since joining the school.

The school very successfully promotes students' social development as a key factor in their being happy and ready to learn alongside others. Lessons focus on assisting students to take into consideration those around them through incorporating a range of activities that promote social interaction. There is an active school council that gives students a strong voice in the school. For example, students influenced the decision to build a new playground and to re-design the car park.

Teachers have highly developed skills in behaviour management. They are proactive in anticipating and so heading-off any potential problems. Because lessons meet students' needs well, the incidence of disruptive behaviour is kept to a minimum. Relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and students are excellent. Students respond well to clear guidance from staff and school routines are well-established, providing a clear structure to each day. Behaviour is consistently managed well and the school and residential units function as a harmonious community. The school successfully develops students' self-confidence, and promotes their independence whenever possible.

Students learn about other faiths and cultures as part of their growing awareness and understanding of the needs of other people. Daily assemblies provide opportunities for reflection and the singing of hymns and songs that carry a spiritual message. Sensory activities help students to feel and experience the world around them. The PSHE and citizenship programme contributes further to students' cultural and moral development. Regular whole-school events such as eco-events, harvest festival and fundraising for charity encourage students' contribution to their school and the wider community.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The school's procedures to promote the welfare, health and safety of students, including the steps it takes to safeguard students, are outstanding. All the required policies are in place and are fully up to date, as is the required training in child protection and for first aid. The school conducts all the necessary checks, including those for the prevention of fire and accidents and undertakes risk assessments for activities and for individual students. Record-keeping is meticulous. A suitable recruitment policy is in place. Records show highly effective working with professionals and outside agencies to support students, and very close links with parent and carers.

The safety and emotional well-being of all students are given a high priority. Staff place an appropriate emphasis on the need for students to take regular exercise and to eat healthily. The school fully meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All the required checks on staff have been completed and include a check with the Criminal Records Bureau. All checks are recorded as required in a single central register.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises are highly suitable for education. The school buildings were formerly a maintained secondary school and have been appropriately adapted and enhanced for their current use. There is a large number of good-sized classrooms and many specialist rooms, including those for design and technology, ICT (with three suites),

art and science, together with a sports hall, a general-purpose hall, a kitchen and a dining hall. The section of the school dedicated for post-16 students has a student café. A suite of rooms, including a small kitchen, provides a self-contained inclusion unit for students with the greatest needs.

The school has lots of space, large playgrounds, communal areas and administrative areas. There are several small rooms where students can find a degree of privacy and two rooms that serve as sensory rooms. The school is in good decorative order.

## **Provision of information**

The school provides almost all the required information for parents, carers and others, most of which is in the school's prospectus. The school does not currently send information annually to local authorities who fund students' placements about how fee income is spent, as required by the regulations. Parents and carers receive written reports detailing the progress made by their children and regular newsletters from the school.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The procedures by which complaints are handled fully meet the regulations.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- supply an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of students to local authorities, and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- as planned, increase the resources to support the sensory curriculum by extending opportunities for the use of therapeutic, complementary and specialist therapies that enhance students' well being and enjoyment.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made).

## Inspection judgements

|             |      |              |            |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

### 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 | √ |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|



## School details

|   |  |           |           |
|---|--|-----------|-----------|
| <b>School status</b>  | Independent  |           |           |
| <b>Type of school</b>   | Special for students with autistic spectrum conditions               |           |           |
| <b>Date school opened</b>   | 1977   |           |           |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>  | 7-19   |           |           |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>   | Mixed  |           |           |
| <b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>                              | Boys: 66   | Girls: 14 | Total: 80 |
| <b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b> | Boys: 66   | Girls: 14 | Total: 80 |
| <b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>                          | Boys: 17   | Girls: 6  | Total: 23 |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>                                       | £35,474 - £67,823  |           |           |
| <b>Address of school</b>  | Clayton Lane<br>Thurnscoe<br>Rotherham<br>South Yorkshire<br>S63 0BG |           |           |
| <b>Telephone number</b>   | 01709 874443   |           |           |
| <b>Email address</b>  | robert.ogden@nas.org.uk  |           |           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>  | Mrs G Roberts  |           |           |
| <b>Proprietor</b>   | National Autistic Society Educational 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.**



25 November 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of the Robert Ogden School, Rotherham S63 0BG**

I am writing to thank you for all your help when I came to inspect your school recently and to tell you what I found.

I think that the quality of education at your school is outstanding. That means it is super! I know that you and your parents and carers think so too, because you told me so in the questionnaires you filled in and when I talked to you.

- You are making outstanding progress and your behaviour is good.
- There is a calm atmosphere in the school that helps you to learn.
- The care the school provides for you is outstanding. This helps to keep you safe.
- The school does very well in helping you to get on with other people and being able to mix with other students, adults and visitors.
- The range of subjects and activities that you engage in is excellent. You have lots of opportunities to learn new things and to get useful qualifications for your future.
- The teaching you get is outstanding. The teachers make sure that everyone is given work to do that suits them best. They keep a very close eye on your progress.

It is clear that you enjoy coming to school and that you are keen to learn. It was good to see all the different activities you do at the end of the day, even the noisy samba percussion! I have suggested to the school that they might want to give you more sensory activities, to add to what you enjoy doing.

Thank you for having me in your school and making me feel welcome.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon  
Her Majesty's Inspector