

The Rowan School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107171
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	356101
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Hilary Ward

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Lianne Sahu
Headteacher	Mrs Avril Young
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2007
School address	4 Durvale Court Furniss Avenue, Sheffield South Yorkshire S17 3PT
Telephone number	0114 2350479
Fax number	0114 2350478
Email address	enquiries@rowan.sheffield.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Inspection number	356101

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons and nine teachers were observed. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, with members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work including intervention lessons and sessions led by speech and language therapists. They looked at documentation relating to various aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding, assessment and pupils' progress, school development planning and curricular plans. The inspectors reviewed 34 parents' and carers' questionnaires, and questionnaire responses from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The clarity of learning objectives for individual pupils in each session and their usefulness in assessing pupils' progress.
- How well the curriculum is reviewed and revised to meet the needs of all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the small number of girls.
- The steps leadership and management, including the governing body, have taken to improve self-evaluation to help to continually improve outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This special school is for pupils with complex speech, language and social communication disorders. Most pupils have an autism spectrum disorder. Pupils are admitted at times other than the usual time of admission to schools, generally transferring from mainstream primary schools. As a result there are very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, only two currently. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are significantly more boys than girls; at present there are only five female pupils. This is typical of similar schools nationally. Pupils are drawn from across the city of Sheffield, a quarter of whom are from minority ethnic groups. A minority are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school holds the Artsmark, Healthy School status and Investors in People status.

At the time of the inspection, the school was in temporary accommodation having suffered a flood in the purpose-built building in December 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Rowan School is an outstanding school. It has gone from strength to strength since its previous inspection. The school now provides an excellent curriculum and high quality of teaching, which enables pupils to make outstanding progress in their personal and academic development from their low starting points. There are very strong links with other agencies to support pupils' progress and welfare. The school has been able to sustain a very high standard of provision and outcomes despite the disruption of having to move temporarily to another building in the middle of a school year. The staff have worked extremely successfully to make up for the inadequacies of the accommodation, including very limited play areas, and to ensure effective indoor and outdoor opportunities, and that pupils are safe and well cared for. The governing body is exceptionally well involved in the work of the school. With school managers, it continually monitors and evaluates the provision to ensure it keeps abreast of best practice. This results in the provision of high-quality education and care for all pupils. The school has sustained excellent teamwork and high staff morale, despite the difficulties that staff have faced. New initiatives are met with enthusiasm and are established effectively, enabling standards to rise continuously. Pupils' attainment on entry is low, and frequently very low however, their learning and progress are exceptionally strong. The development of their social and communication skills is particularly outstanding as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are extremely keen to succeed. Many parents and carers appreciate the high quality of provision, a typical comment being, 'He has made progress way beyond my expectations, both socially and academically.'

The atmosphere in the school is calm and productive. Pupils behave exceptionally well and when there are occasional incidents they are extremely well managed by staff. This means that pupils are able to concentrate well in lessons and make rapid progress. Their obvious enjoyment in their learning is impressive. Pupils feel exceptionally safe and they have a very strong understanding of how to take care of themselves. All staff provide pupils with exceptional care, guidance and support in their personal and social development, through the use of challenging targets that are well focused on the needs of the individual. Teachers, support assistants, leaders and other professionals work together as teams to assess pupils continuously and to share an understanding of how the next steps can be addressed in all lessons and social situations. The very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are equally well monitored and assessed as individuals, as a result of which they too make rapid progress in all areas of learning.

Pupils develop a good understanding of themselves and their school, but a less well developed understanding of their local community and the needs of others. The school has aspirations to extend the already excellent partnerships further to improve opportunities in the community for their own pupils and so that others better understand the needs of those with autism. Rigorous self-evaluation has led to significant

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

improvements since the last inspection and, together with the plans for the future, demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve the school still further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen and extend partnerships to develop pupils' awareness of the local and global communities in which they live, and to promote better understanding of autism spectrum disorders in those communities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils enter the school at various times with attainment which is well below that expected nationally. Although attainment remains low compared to mainstream schools, pupils make excellent progress from their overall very low starting points and taking into account the barriers to their learning. They often exceed the challenging targets the school sets for them. As a result, some higher-achieving pupils sit national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2, albeit attaining a lower level than that nationally expected for their age. These achievements are the result of outstanding teaching and the exciting creative curriculum, which engages them so well in their learning.

Pupils often start school with little or no verbal communication skills. With exceptionally good support from the speech and language therapists, teachers and teaching assistants introduce pupils to a range of communication strategies, including speech, sign and visual symbols. Pupils begin to understand the value of communication and by the time they leave the school most have developed good oral communication skills. Similarly, pupils develop a good understanding of social behaviour and interaction through the consistent messages and reinforcement of staff. As a result they make exceptional progress in their social skills and independence. They are given opportunities to practise these skills in a variety of settings, including with pupils in partner schools. Pupils learn to understand the value of physical activity and to make healthy food choices, and the school misses no opportunity to reinforce this through the varied activity programmes and practical work on healthy lifestyles. They thoroughly enjoy spending a quarter of their time in outdoor activities and learn to appreciate and reflect on the world around them. During the inspection, the whole school was following a theme week on 'Good to be Us'. Some of the older pupils were considering the properties of a rainbow through their five senses; an abstract concept which is not easy for these pupils. One said that a rainbow is, 'like a beautiful bird' and this contributed to an excellent class poem on the subject.

Pupils celebrate the diversity of cultures within their own school and begin to develop an understanding of the needs and beliefs of others, although this aspect is less well developed. Nevertheless, the school ensures that events, such as the Children in Need annual appeal, are celebrated and that pupils understand the reasons for them. At the time of the inspection, classes were making preparations for fun fund-raising projects for Red Nose Day, including making comic pictures of members of staff.

The school recently recognised that it needed to improve outcomes for pupils in their use of information and communication technology. They modified the language of programmes of assessment, with the result that pupils' attainment in this area has increased significantly. This has been maintained despite a reduced access to technology in the temporary building.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils very much enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and enjoy excellent relationships with adults whom they know care for them. They learn to manage their behaviour so that they can concentrate in lessons and work cooperatively with their peers. Attendance is above the average for mainstream primary schools and well above average for similar schools. This contributes to the outstanding progress pupils make in all areas of their learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is outstanding. Its quality is never less than good. This leads to the rapid gains which pupils make in their learning. There is secure assessment of each pupil, which is shared with all those working with that pupil. Class teams meet regularly to determine pupils' next steps and how these are to be achieved in each lesson. The excellent use of assessment and the setting of clear shared targets and objectives, for individuals in lessons and in social contexts, contribute highly effectively to pupils' rapid progress. The use of assessment has improved significantly from the last inspection.

Teachers and teaching assistants have a very well-developed understanding of the way in which pupils with autism learn. They offer highly practical and multi-sensory experiences, which mean pupils have fun in their lessons to enable effective learning to take place. This is supported by the excellent creative curriculum, which has been introduced since the last inspection, and which is constantly evolving through review and evaluation by all the staff.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

An excellent focus on promoting the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and an extensive programme of personal, social and health education permeates the whole curriculum. It also provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their self-esteem and enjoy success in a range of activities both on and off site.

The school pays particular attention to pupils' emotional health and mental well-being. Staff work highly effectively with parents and carers, outside agencies and other professionals, to offer outstanding care, guidance and support through consistent management strategies. This leads to pupils being increasingly able to interact with others in an appropriate way and to manage their own behaviour and develop their independence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is highly effective, largely due to outstanding teamwork and shared leadership, under the aspirational guidance of the headteacher. Knowledge and skills are shared by more than one leader, which strengthens the school's ability to sustain its excellent overall effectiveness. Members of the governing body are exceptionally well informed and involved in all aspects of the provision. They make an excellent contribution to self-evaluation and to improvement planning.

Teaching and learning, and the progress pupils make, are regularly monitored by managers at all levels, so that staff can be challenged and areas which may require improvement can be quickly identified. All staff are encouraged to contribute ideas or to initiate projects so that they feel they have a voice in decisions. The school pays very close attention to supporting the professional development of its staff. This, and the excellent teamwork, means that all staff share high ambitions for the school and for its pupils, reflected in the excellent outcomes they achieve. It supports an excellent capacity to improve still further.

The school enjoys high-quality partnerships with a range of professionals, with local primary schools, other special schools and agencies, all of which contribute to pupils' excellent quality learning. The school community is highly cohesive and has plans to develop even further pupils' inclusion into the local community to encourage acceptance and a knowledge and understanding of people with autism. Very close work with parents and carers, to help them support the personal, social and academic development of their child, is outstanding. The individualised approach ensures that all pupils have outstanding equal opportunities to enjoy success. The small number of girls is seamlessly included and particular attention is given to their personal and social needs and to ensuring that they

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

can safely participate in enrichment activities, such as residential visits. Safeguarding procedures are of the highest order and underpin everything that the school does. Risk assessments are exemplary. Although the accommodation at the time of inspection was far from ideal, staff had worked extremely hard to make it welcoming and safe and to minimise very effectively the disruption for pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

At the time of the inspection there were two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. With such small numbers, children are included in the mainstream of provision with Year 1 pupils, but through a much individualised approach. Their progress towards their early learning goals is effectively monitored and assessed and indicates that they make outstanding progress very rapidly. They participate in well-structured routines with the use of visual symbols and signed prompts to support emerging communication. The temporary accommodation does not enable free flow provision to an exciting outdoor environment, although this is available on the school's permanent site. However, the school is currently making good use of local facilities and a nearby park to provide opportunities for outdoor exploration and play.

Children enjoy the same outstanding care and guidance for their learning, safety and well-being as other pupils, notably through the support of the highly-skilled teaching assistants. Teachers and assistants work together to plan very effectively for the children as individuals so that they enjoy a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. In one session, a child had a 'wow' moment when he was encouraged to mix blue and yellow paint together, after a stunned silence he exclaimed, 'It's green!' The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Over half of parents and carers returned questionnaires. They were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the excellent quality of care and education that their child receives. Several expressed a view that they feel lucky their child has a place at Rowan. They appreciate the support which the school gives to them as families of children with autism spectrum disorders; one parent commenting that, 'This school, staff and head have become like a third parent.' One or two respondents said they would like more information about what their children are learning but inspectors found that the vast majority of parents and carers expressed satisfaction with the communication they receive from school. A typical comment, supported by inspection findings, said '...This school brings out all that is good in my son.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Rowan School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 63 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	76	8	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	74	8	24	0	0	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	31	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	76	7	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	25	74	7	21	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	85	4	12	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	79	7	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	85	5	15	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	88	4	12	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	91	3	9	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



18 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Rowan School, Sheffield S17 3PT

I am writing to thank you for your help when we inspected your school and to tell you what we found. Your school is an amazing place which gives you outstanding opportunities to succeed and, most importantly, to have fun. You told us in your questionnaires and when we talked with you, that you are very happy in school, and feel safe and well supported. Your parents and carers have also told us that they are happy with the progress you are making. We think that:

- you are making excellent progress because of the outstanding teaching
- you enjoy excellent relationships with your teachers and support assistants, who care very well for you
- you work very well towards your targets
- you have a really exciting curriculum which helps you to learn about all sorts of interesting things.

The headteacher and all the staff want to continue to make things better for you and to improve your school still further. We have asked them to think about how they can help you to understand even more about people living in other parts of the world.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Ward

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.