

Rowden House School

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik

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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 inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Rowden House is an independent special school that opened in March 1986. It is registered to admit up to 48 secondary and post-16 students with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. There are currently 15 students on roll aged between 14 and 19 years and seven are looked after. All have a statement of special educational needs and all students reside in accommodation provided by the proprietor. The school aims to improve students' communication, independence and life skills.

The previous headteacher resigned at the end of June 2012 and an interim headteacher took over the leadership and management of the school in July 2012. The proprietor has very recently advertised for a new headteacher, with a view to appointing a substantive headteacher sometime during 2013. A new head of education was appointed in December 2011.

Context of the inspection

The school was last inspected in November 2011, when it was judged to be providing a satisfactory quality of education. Behaviour, teaching and assessment were also judged satisfactory. All regulatory requirements were met except two. The school did not use effective strategies for managing behaviour and to encourage students to act responsibly (regulation 3(h)). Students' work was not assessed thoroughly and assessment information was not used effectively to evaluate students' progress (regulation 4). A satisfactory action plan was produced following the inspection; however, a monitoring inspection was required to evaluate the progress made in implementing the action plan. This is the first monitoring visit to judge the progress made in remedying the two regulatory failures.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

In November 2011, inspectors judged that staff were not sufficiently well briefed on their roles for engaging students in learning and in helping them to behave well. The strategies used to manage very challenging behaviour were not sufficiently embedded. In its action plan the school planned to engage all students in learning activities. All students were to be encouraged to remain on task and distracting and

disruptive behaviour was to be minimised by staff managing students' behaviour more effectively and more consistently.

Curriculum provision, lesson planning, behaviour plans and classroom organisation have been improved so as to meet students' specific learning and behaviour needs. Suitable behaviour plans are in place and teaching focuses well on behaviour targets and the objectives specified in students' statements of special educational need. Training for all staff has established behavioural expectations and routine monitoring by senior leaders, therapists and educational psychologists ensures that expectations are met. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in classrooms and have good knowledge about individual's specific learning difficulties, particularly their behavioural needs, and know which behavioural aspects must be improved and how to do that. A range of behaviour management strategies are used to get individuals to engage with tasks for at least adequate periods of time, in order that lesson objectives are met. Lesson observations reveal that challenging behaviour is effectively dealt with in line with agreed procedures. Teaching approaches and the activities provided and the resources used in lessons suitably engage individuals in learning and promote good behaviour. Distracting and disruptive behaviour is appropriately minimised. Behaviour guidance is suitably embedded in practice and there is consistency in the methods used by staff and other professionals to promote good behaviour.

At the time of the last inspection, assessment procedures lacked the degree of rigour needed to measure the small steps of progress made by individuals. The assembling of evidence to demonstrate the rate of students' progress over time was not sharp enough. Assessment outcomes were suitably moderated but there were no opportunities to compare judgements to similar students' performance in other schools and against national benchmarks. The school planned to introduce more robust assessment procedures and to track students' progress effectively. Evidence of students' achievement was to be more effectively gathered and evaluated. Assessment information was to be used more effectively to inform lesson planning and intervention. Assessments were to be externally moderated and outcomes validated against external benchmarks.

A new assessment, recording and reporting policy has been adopted and it is implemented effectively. All staff have been trained in the revised assessment procedures to improve their assessment skills and ensure that expectations and assessment arrangements are explicit and rigorous. Effective monitoring of the assessment process ensures guidance is closely followed. A commercial assessment framework is used to track the small steps in individuals' progress securely and thoroughly. Performance outcomes are compared to similar schools and national benchmarks. The assessment of the standards achieved on accredited courses is externally moderated and validated. Robust systems are in place to moderate assessments of students' attainment and progress in all of the subjects taught, to ensure that judgements made about outcomes are fair and accurate. The information gained from assessment informs lesson planning to ensure that work is suitably matched to individuals' specific learning needs.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for students with severe learning difficulties		
Date school opened	3 March 1986		
Age range of pupils	11–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 3	Total: 15
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 12	Girls: 3	Total: 15
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 12	Girls: 3	Total: 15
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
Annual fees (boarders)	£175,000–£210,000		
Address of school	Rowden House Bromyard HR7 4LS		
Telephone number	01885 488096		
Email address	head@rowdenhouse.com		
Headteacher	Mark Flynn		
Proprietor	The Senad Group		