

Rodney House School

388 Slade Lane, Burnage, Manchester M19 2HT

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All aspects of this wonderful school's work are outstanding because leaders and managers, including the governing body, are continually seeking ways to raise standards and to improve the quality of teaching even further. They ensure that Rodney House continues to be a centre of excellence for Early Years Foundation Stage children who have complex special educational needs.
- Although the school's self-evaluation document is accurate, there remains scope to refine the school's monitoring further by taking greater account of the data that track children's progress and using these to support their evaluations of children's achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Almost all children make outstanding progress from exceptionally low starting points, especially in the areas of personal and social development, and communication and language.
- Children's achievement is outstanding because the quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly knowledgeable and make sure they plan work which is matched to the needs of every individual child.
- It is clear that children gain huge enjoyment from their time in school. Their behaviour and safety are of paramount importance and behaviour is outstanding because strategies to manage it are consistent across all settings.
- The school provides enormous support to parents and, through its outreach role, to other early years settings. The exceptional partnerships with health professionals ensure all needs are met so that children are ready to learn.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 10 lessons led by four teachers and teaching assistants at the Rodney House base and the other four satellite bases. Two of the lessons were joint observations with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, a children’s centre manager, the school’s quality assurance visitor, staff and with parents.
- A range of school documents were examined, including children’s progress data, policies, school improvement plans, teachers’ curriculum plans, and reports and evaluations of outreach work and parent partnership. The inspectors reviewed the school’s own analysis of questionnaires to parents but there were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to take these into account.
- Inspectors visited all satellite bases where they also observed snack time, a parents’ induction session and a class team meeting, as well as visiting a ‘cycling for the disabled’ session in a local park.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Potter	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rodney House provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and just beyond, who have a range of complex special educational needs. These include profound and multiple learning difficulties, global developmental delay, and social and communication difficulties. At the time of the inspection almost half of the children either had a diagnosis or were undergoing assessment for autistic spectrum disorders. This proportion is not necessarily typical and can change with new admissions.
- Children are admitted by referral from a multi-disciplinary assessment panel at any time in the year. At the time of the inspection the number of children attending was quite low but expected to build across the school year.
- Provision is at the Rodney House base and at four other satellite bases in children's centres across the city. These are at: Old Moat Children's Centre (Sure Start); Lyndene Road Children's Centre (Barnardos); Sacred Heart Children's Centre (Sure Start); and Martenscroft Children's Centre (Sure Start). Children usually attend the base closest to where they live. All satellite bases are managed and staffed from Rodney House in liaison with the children's centre staff.
- The school also provides outreach services on request to other early years settings across the city.
- Only a very small proportion of children are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school holds a number of awards including Parent Partnership Award, National Healthy Schools status, Inclusion Quality Mark and Investors in People.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further refine the school's monitoring by including data in the school's self-evaluation document to support their evaluations on children's achievement and the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The attainment of children when they enter Rodney House is very low. Teachers and teaching assistants assess children thoroughly with other professionals when they are admitted so that they can plan work which is extremely well matched to the developmental needs of each individual child. As a result, almost all children make rapid progress and the vast majority exceed the ambitious targets set for them each term.
- Most children are at the very early stages of readiness for learning but they show how much they enjoy their time in school by smiling and listening. They follow familiar routines, listen to and join in the singing games which cue them into new activities. They make simple choices between two objects. In one session, following up some work on harvest time, a child held a potato and clearly indicated that he understood what it was.
- A few children make such good progress that they begin to recognise letter sounds and shapes. They enjoy sessions alongside other children attending the children's centres who are beginning work on phonics. They learn to recognise their written names and follow visual timelines. Some children can recognise numbers and are starting to count.
- Teachers have very high expectations for the children and help them to develop the personal and communication skills they need to reach them. The development of early communication is at the core of all that the school does. A wide range of strategies are used including sign, picture symbols, real objects and other prompts. These strategies help children express their needs and wishes. Children clearly indicate that they enjoy music and singing, which are a big part of their routines.
- Staff teams meet together frequently to assess children's progress. The assessment and recording of children's progress over time has improved since the previous inspection. Every member of staff in the team contributes information from observations they have made. Using their knowledge, together they very carefully plan children's next steps and this ensures everyone is precisely clear about what they want each child to achieve in each lesson.
- Staff are highly motivated and very skilled at picking up on any areas of concern and finding the right solution so that children can make rapid progress. They are able to set children challenging targets because they know them so well. As a result, all children have an equal opportunity to succeed and children who are eligible for the pupil premium make equally outstanding progress.
- The children benefit from the inclusive nature of each of the children's centres. They play a full part in their own communities, learning alongside their friends. The specialist skills and knowledge of the Rodney House staff, together with those of the children's centre staff, bring mutual benefits to all the children attending the centres.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled practitioners and give children an excellent start to their education. Warm and supportive relationships between staff and children are at the heart of this success. Staff know instinctively when to support and when to stand back and let children try things for themselves, even though most children need some support to explore new objects.
- Teachers plan lessons in a rich and very varied curriculum which are exceptionally well linked to children's needs and interests so that they want to join in and learn. They build the learning in very small steps which are clearly based on accurate assessment of the children's progress so far. As a result, every child is able to enjoy success. In one lesson a small girl laughed as she bounced up and down on a ball for the first time, supported by a teaching assistant who encouraged her and shared in her enthusiasm.
- Teachers place a very strong emphasis on developing children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all of their lessons. In a music session, for example, a teacher asked the

children, 'How do you think the teddies feel after all that bouncing?' Opportunities for children's personal development are broadened still further through the collaborative work with the children's centres and by frequent trips into the locality.

- Children are provided with enriching experiences, such as dance, physical awareness sessions, riding on adapted bikes in the local park, walks and visits to the adventure farm. Partnerships with other professionals are very strong and ensure that children's communication, physical and mobility needs are met extremely well.
- Over time, leaders have judged all the lessons they have observed to be at least good and most to be outstanding. This reflects the quality of teaching seen during the inspection in all bases. Resources are imaginatively used to help children's understanding. Many are carefully thought out in order to provide sensory experiences, such as a pine cone to represent a hedgehog's prickles in a sensory story.
- Teachers are skilled at planning varied activities and moving sessions at a fast pace to maintain children's interest. Similarly, they give children enough time to absorb new ideas. Children understand the clear use of the word 'finish', as they move from one activity to another.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Even though the school operates from a number of different bases, it is a very harmonious community. The management of the children is very consistent across the bases, something the senior leadership team and their staff have worked hard to achieve. Teachers and teaching assistants are very responsive to children's moods and are particularly skilled at motivating them to join in sessions. They recognise that children need to feel safe and confident to be able to learn. When children are upset, staff talk calmly to them and help them to quieten down and be ready to join in again. They build in comforting routines and familiar songs which help to settle children into sessions.
- Children demonstrate that they feel safe and happy in their settings through the excellent relationships they develop with staff, who want the best for them. As a result, their behaviour is outstanding and they make excellent progress in developing their confidence and resilience. Parents agree that the school keeps their children safe and that they want to come to school. As a result, attendance is high, even though some children have unavoidable periods of absence for medical reasons.
- All staff recognise the need to ensure the safety and well-being of the children. Safeguarding and behaviour management training, record keeping and risk assessments are all of the highest quality and revisited regularly.
- Rodney House provides significant support to parents where necessary, such as helping them to develop their own skills in managing their children's behaviour at home. For instance, at the parent induction session led by the school's parent support adviser a parent confirmed that advice had made an enormous difference in helping everyone at home get a decent night's sleep.
- Although many of the children have yet to learn how to play with others, they benefit from the inclusive nature of the children's centres, where they can see other children playing and learn to share. Sessions such as snack times help children to develop social skills such as taking turns and saying or signing 'please' and 'thank you'. At these times, children begin to develop an understanding of eating healthily. Some children find this difficult and have very limited diets, but staff work hard to find tempting foods to broaden their tastes.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide exceptional leadership to the school. During a period of uncertainty, while the local authority has been reviewing provision for early years

children with complex special educational needs, they have sustained high morale. While setting up the satellite bases, they have ensured that all staff still feel part of Rodney House School. Staff strongly agree that they feel very well supported to improve their own skills and that they enjoy the extra responsibility they have been given to manage the different bases or to contribute to outreach advisory work.

- Senior leaders, including members of the governing body, are very ambitious for the school. They work alongside the local authority to plan the future so that provision across the city for early years children with complex special educational needs is of the highest standard.
- Although the development of the satellite bases within the children's centres and the highly regarded outreach service have created greater flexibility, the management of such diverse provision can be challenging. Nevertheless, the senior leadership team, along with members of the governing body, coordinate and monitor them highly effectively to ensure a consistent, high-quality provision across all the bases.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest. The school analyses its data on children's progress exceptionally well but does not include them in the self-evaluation document to provide evidence of the impact of the school's work. Nevertheless, self-evaluation correctly identifies improvement priorities. As a result, planning is sharply focused on just a few areas considered to be of most importance.
- Senior and middle leaders monitor children's progress highly effectively. The attention to each child's personal learning journey, detailed assessments and planning of their next steps ensures that no groups or individuals achieve less well than others from their starting points.
- The performance management of teachers and teaching assistants drives continuous improvement. Lesson observations, learning walks and drop-ins, for example, are rigorous and ensure that the quality of teaching remains outstanding. Targets for teachers are linked to school improvement and any drop in performance is met with immediate support.
- Although only a very small number of children are eligible for the pupil premium, funding has been used astutely to support the exceptional work the school undertakes with parents to ensure equal opportunities for all.
- Transitions in and out of the school are exemplary. The parent support adviser, leaders and teachers work very closely with families and other professionals to share information and advice so that everything is in place for children to be successful when they move on.
- The governance of the school :
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is knowledgeable and experienced and leads the governors well. The governing body has a good representation of parent governors, although this does lead to a more rapid turnover of governors than might be the case in most schools because of the short time their children attend the school. The governing body has established effective links with the local authority in order to plan for the future. They monitor the school and all its satellite bases very well to ensure the quality of provision is consistent. They manage the school's finances and resources very effectively to meet the diverse needs of children in all the settings. Governors ensure the school's arrangements for safeguarding its children are of the highest quality and meet government requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105616
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	403779

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	2–6
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Stansfield
Headteacher	Nuala Finegan
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2010
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