

Rhodes Farm School

Unit 1, Bunns Lane Works, Mill Hill, London, NW7 2AJ

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Teaching is good and allows the pupils to make good progress with their learning.
- The curriculum is adapted well so that it meets the varying needs of pupils, most of whom join the school for a relatively short period.
- Pupils form excellent relationships with the staff who strongly support the pupils in overcoming their personal and emotional difficulties.
- There are outstanding arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils, underpinned by the very effective teamwork between the school and Rhodes Farm Centre staff.
- The school leaders understand well the school's strengths and where improvement is required. They regularly check on the quality of what the school offers so that there is constant improvement of achievement and teaching.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Some learning time is lost because of weaknesses in the arrangements for lunchtime and for attendance at therapy sessions.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn independently.
- Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of the next steps they need to take to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected following one day's notice.
- The inspector observed five lessons, taught by five teachers, jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietors, the headteacher and pupils. The inspector read and discussed a range of policy documentation and looked at examples of pupils' work and records of progress.
- Additional information was considered from seven staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rhodes Farm School was registered as an independent special school in July 2013 and this is its first inspection.
- It is a small co-educational school which caters for day pupils in the age range 11 to 18 years who are resident at the Rhodes Farm Specialist Treatment Centre in Mill Hill, London. The Centre offers support and treatment to young people who have an eating disorder.
- Pupils usually stay at the school for twelve weeks and then return to their home schools, although a few pupils stay for shorter or longer periods.
- There are currently 20 pupils on roll, none of whom has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school aims to provide education for vulnerable young people who require a stimulating, caring, therapeutic, attractive, calm and secure environment.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn independently in lessons.
- Make sure that pupils have a good understanding of the next steps they need to take to improve their literacy and numeracy, for example by knowing their individual targets.
- In collaboration with the Centre, make sure that no learning time is lost because of lunchtime or individual therapy arrangements.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good because the teaching is effective and the staff are committed to help the pupils make up lost ground arising from their difficulties and consequent disrupted schooling. From average and below average starting points, all groups of pupils make good gains in learning across all subjects because they receive constant encouragement and support from classroom staff. Their achievement is not outstanding because there is some loss of curriculum time, and because pupils are not always given the chance to learn independently. Pupils achieve well in literacy and numeracy, where there is an appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' skills, although not all pupils know their next steps in these subjects. During lessons pupils make mainly good progress because of teachers' careful planning underpinned by a good knowledge of the levels that each pupil has already achieved. The school's tracking information shows that most pupils are on course to achieve good levels of success with GCSE examinations, which the school is registered to administer. Careful transition arrangements and close liaison with the pupils' local schools mean that pupils are prepared extremely well for either a return to their local school or for life beyond school.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils make outstanding progress with their behaviour and personal development. Classroom staff give constant consideration to pupils' personal difficulties throughout the school day. Within the very small groups, staff quickly come to know what makes each pupil tick. There is a strong shared understanding of pupils' individual needs. Pupils are encouraged to take control of their own treatment, reflect on their difficulties, and discuss their progress in overcoming them in the community meetings. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, enjoy attending school and say that they wish to come to school on Saturdays as well. Improvements in attendance are outstanding.

The strong, positive relationships established in the school provide pupils with positive role models and a sense of belonging. The staff correctly give the pupils' well-being and security a high priority. For particularly vulnerable pupils, staff from the Treatment Centre remain in close physical contact with the pupils throughout the school day. Planning is clear cut and explicit and understood by all through the weekly community meetings. This allows pupils to be free from risk and feel secure and well cared for, whether in the classroom or off site. The school has ready an appropriate set of procedures for managing difficult behaviour should it arise, but these are hardly ever called for because of the careful and sensitive way in which pupils are approached. Staff in the school and the Centre share meticulous records of pupils' progress in their emotional and social development. There are very good procedures for preparing the pupils to return quickly to mainstream life as soon as they are ready, with reducing levels of vigilance and supervision.

Pupils are given excellent opportunities for their spiritual, moral and cultural development, particularly through work in personal, social and health education, humanities, art and music. These subjects enable pupils to develop a respect for other ethnic and cultural heritages, and to discuss and confront issues of stereotyping and prejudice. They also enable pupils to learn about, and understand, the role of public services and how they may contribute to the wider community.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and ensures that pupils make good progress with their learning. Teachers plan lessons in good detail, basing them on well-prepared schemes of work. For older pupils, teachers carefully follow the requirements for the various external accreditations being studied. The school has developed a good system to track the progress of pupils using National

Curriculum levels and examination grades. Through a rigorous assessment of previous learning, teachers have a very good understanding of the individual learning needs and capabilities of pupils. This enables them to set work at the right level of challenge. Teaching staff are sensitive to the pupils' personal difficulties and take these fully into account when planning the extent of support and intervention required in lessons. Pupils are very responsive to classroom staff and are happy to ask questions and seek clarification if they are unsure. Occasionally, teachers leave pupils too long when they are stuck on a written response. Teachers appropriately emphasise the development of numeracy, reading and writing skills in most lessons, but pupils are not always fully aware of the next steps they need to take to improve their learning in these areas. Teachers have good expectations that pupils will play a full part in lessons, and pupils rise to this challenge. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to give pupils choices about their own ways of working and making progress, so developing them as independent learners.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The quality of the curriculum is good and enables pupils to learn well. The school shows clearly through its curriculum that it is very committed to ensuring that pupils are well prepared for the return to mainstream learning and life. Teaching activities are well adapted in order to meet the individual needs and capabilities of the pupils, enabling them to achieve well academically and to make excellent progress in their personal development. The curriculum is particularly strong in its provision for the creative arts. During the inspection, pupils said how they would hate to miss out on a music lesson, citing this as a highlight of the week. The corridors in the school are adorned with the pupils' very well executed paintings and ring with the sound of pupils' 'beat box' compositions. The school pays good attention to the pupils' requests and makes appropriate arrangements when pupils ask for additional learning experiences such as dance and drama. Currently, pupils are asking for extra time for design and technology, and the school is seeking ways to provide this. The curriculum emphasises appropriately the development of skills in literacy and numeracy in most subjects, although opportunities to reinforce individual targets in these areas are sometimes missed. Although pupils are very positive about the school, they say, with justification, that they feel that they are missing out on some learning time because of organisational barriers. Lunchtimes are longer than necessary, and when pupils attend a therapy session of, say, 45 minutes, they will sometimes miss out on half a day's teaching at school because of transport difficulties. This hampers their progress.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and the school meets all the independent school standards. The school provides all pupils with first-rate levels of supervision and support. The proprietors have developed all the necessary health and safety policies, including those for the management of behaviour and the prevention of bullying. The headteacher rigorously checks that all staff implement these policies consistently. The school has exemplary procedures for health and safety, fire safety and premises safety. Health and safety records are kept meticulously. The proprietors provide staff training at the right level in all required areas, including child protection and first aid. Records of training are regularly updated. There is an excellent relationship with the staff from the Centre so that there are commonly adopted systems for attending to the health needs of the pupils. Staff consistently implement the agreed systems and routines for keeping pupils safe and free from harm, with a very strong emphasis on preventing and reducing any risk-taking behaviours through direct supervision. In most cases, this works well, although occasionally lessons are interrupted by the continuous beeping of the Centre staff's radio communicators. Regular assessments of risk are made for activities, and care is taken to avoid pupils being overprotected so that they can return to independent learning in the mainstream. The school methodically carries out all the required checks on the suitability of staff and enters these checks in a single central register. The school carefully maintains admission and attendance registers in accordance with the regulations.

Leadership and management**Good**

The quality of leadership and management is good and the school meets all regulatory requirements. The proprietors and headteacher give the highest priority to pupils' academic progress and personal development, making sure that pupils have a good breadth of relevant and interesting learning experiences that address their personal and learning needs well. The proprietors have good educational experience and give direct support and guidance to the staff through regular review and feedback. They know well the strengths of the school and the areas where improvement is necessary. These areas are encapsulated accurately in the school's development plan which is a live, working document containing the steps the school has to take in order to improve further. The proprietors and headteacher have put in place good procedures for managing the performance of teachers including lesson observations and setting goals for improvement. This means that all staff are moving forward in the same direction towards agreed objectives. The accommodation provides a pleasant environment for learning. Classrooms are well lit and very well decorated. The space available is adequate overall, although accommodation for specialist, practical teaching, for example in design and technology and music, is limited. The school makes use of the accommodation at the Centre for physical education and dance, where there are showers available for pupils' use. The school's website offers prospective parents and local authorities all the necessary information about the school's provision, including the procedures for making a complaint should this be necessary.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	139835
Inspection number	429213
DfE registration number	302/6005

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Day Special School
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Adel El-Shirbini and Mrs Karen El-Shirbini
Headteacher	Mrs Karen El-Shirbini
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,500 per annum
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