

The Rowan School

4 Durvale Court, Furniss Avenue, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S17 3PT

Inspection dates 10-11 December 2013

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.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils make exceptionally rapid progress from usually very low starting points when they join the school.
- Outstanding teaching ensures pupils' excellent progress in communication and social skills.
- This very strong foundation secures further outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in the other subjects over time.
- Staff know the pupils extremely well. This ensures a very precise match of work to the needs of each individual, so that pupils are eager to work and to learn.
- Adults' skills frequently prevent behavioural difficulties from arising or ensure the effects are minimised so that pupils swiftly resume work.
- Pupils, who were able to do so, told the inspectors that they feel very safe in school. These pupils are very clear about what they should do if any incidents occur.
- Just occasionally in lessons, when working by themselves, some of the younger pupils find it difficult to choose which activities to do.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have been highly effective in maintaining the school's strengths since the previous inspection.
- They have secured further improvements to teaching and achievement and have started to share the school's outstanding work with other schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons and other activities for shorter periods of time. Of these, seven were joint observations with senior leaders.
- The inspectors took account of 18 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and of the school's own survey of parents' views.
- The inspectors met with groups of staff and pupils. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's records of pupils' progress and behaviour, evidence of the checks made on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to safeguarding and attendance.

Inspection team

Liz Godman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pauline Pitman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Rowan school is a small primary school which caters for pupils with complex speech, language and communication disorders. All current pupils have autistic spectrum conditions with associated behavioural and learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. They attend the school from across the City of Sheffield, with a few from neighbouring local authorities.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children of military personnel) is broadly average.
- Most pupils are from White British heritage backgrounds.
- There are very few girls in the school.
- Pupils join the school at different times in their primary education.
- The headteacher is a National Leader in Education and four members of staff are Specialist Leaders in Education.
- The school is a National Teaching School and works in partnership with other mainstream and special schools and a university to provide initial and in-service teacher education relating to special educational needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the use of the times when the younger pupils choose their activities in order to make sure that these activities help the pupils to learn as well as they do when they are working with an adult.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding as a result of the extremely rapid progress they make from their often very low starting points when they join the school.
- The proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress is exceptionally high in all year groups and in all subjects. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils are working at the early levels of the National Curriculum, and some are close to the levels expected for their age.
- The most-able pupils often exceed their challenging targets, which are based on national guidance. As a result, new and even more challenging targets are set. This ensures the pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology has risen each year since 2011.
- Although the numbers are very small for reliable comparison, there is no evidence of any difference in the attainment or progress of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium and other pupils.
- Irrespective of their individual special educational needs, all pupils make outstanding progress in their communication, confidence and social skills. This ensures that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics accelerates during their time in Key Stage 2. The rapid progress of all groups of pupils is indicative of how effectively the school promotes equality of opportunity.
- By the time they reach Years 4 to 6, many pupils are fluent and confident readers. They are able to choose from a wide variety of texts and understand and recall very well what they have read.
- The younger pupils, and those with more significant learning difficulties, make excellent gains in their reading and writing skills through the use of signs, symbols and information technology.
- Many pupils greatly enjoy their work in mathematics and are eager to be challenged. This is because teachers are very skilled in pre-empting behavioural difficulties and in engaging pupils in activities where they can succeed. As a result, pupils work successfully on different mathematical tasks, for example relating to place-value or to the relationship between fractions and decimals.
- Some Year 6 pupils, in conversation with the inspectors, said that they feel very well prepared for secondary school. This is supported by their great confidence and very positive attitudes as well as by their rapidly developing skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching ensures pupils' outstanding achievement. This is confirmed by the school's accurate records of the quality of teaching and its very positive effects on pupils' rapid progress over time.
- Teaching is of a consistently high quality, irrespective of the teacher, the subject or the class. There are no differences in the quality of teaching for those known to be eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils.
- Particularly strong teaching of communication and social skills ensures pupils' marked progress in these areas and provides a strong basis for the very effective teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school identified writing as an area for further development in its plans and took steps to address this. These actions have been very effective. This can be seen in pupils' work, where many are learning to write for different purposes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a detailed knowledge of the pupils and know exactly what interests them and what distresses them. They use this knowledge to great effect. As a result, adults pre-empt pupils' reactions or intervene very swiftly. Consequently, behavioural difficulties are averted and are replaced by highly purposeful and rapid learning.

- Work is very precisely matched to the needs of individual pupils and adults have very high expectations. The interesting activities which teachers provide capture the pupils' interests and ensure that all are very eager to learn.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make regular and detailed checks on pupils' progress in lessons and adjust the lesson as it proceeds so that pupils are challenged even further.
- Teachers check pupils' work carefully and ensure that pupils know how they can improve it. Assessment is very accurate and is checked with other schools. The information is used very well to plan the next steps for each pupil.
- Staff recognise when pupils need time to think or to be calm and make allowance for this. This helps to build pupils' confidence and helps them to communicate clearly and effectively.
- Teachers are constantly seeking the best ways to ensure that the pupils are able to work and to find things out for themselves.
- Consequently, there are times when younger pupils are encouraged to choose their activities. However, some of the younger pupils find this difficult. As a result, they do not learn as well as they do when they are working with an adult individually or in a small group.
- Additional provision to meet pupils' particular needs is carefully planned and organised. For example, some pupils work in a small group to develop their speech, language and communication skills. These pupils are making significant gains in speaking and in their knowledge of vocabulary and ideas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are exceptionally eager to learn. The older pupils are very keen to find things out for themselves. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is reflected in their very good attendance. Younger pupils are less confident, but the school's work ensures they are building communication and social skills and are becoming increasingly eager to work and to join in.
- Pupils show high levels of enjoyment during lessons. A number of lessons take place in the school grounds. Pupils are excited by this and it greatly enhances their love of learning.
- There are very few girls in the school. Careful thought is given to their needs, so that sometimes they work together in a small group. This ensures their confidence and well-being.
- Pupils, who were able to do so, told the inspectors that they feel very safe in school. Their parents, who responded to the questionnaire and to the school's own survey, agree.
- Pupils' confidence and security was also seen in the dining room during the school Christmas lunch. Almost all took part and no one showed distress.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe. Some are very proficient in their use of information technology, but because of their autistic spectrum conditions do not always recognise the potential dangers. Consequently, the school is working with parents to support safe use of the internet.
- Similarly, some pupils do not understand what bullying is. However, they know how to respond to incidents and told the inspectors they would walk away and tell a teacher.
- Behaviour is exceptionally well managed and the school's records show a marked improvement in the behaviour of individual pupils over time.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and of their progress. They spoke well to the inspectors and said how the school has helped them to greatly improve their learning and behaviour.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have been very successful in ensuring that the school's overall effectiveness has continued to be outstanding since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have secured further improvements to teaching and to achievement and have started to share the school's outstanding work with other schools.

- The headteacher and senior staff have ensured that a careful balance has been maintained in retaining the very high quality of the school's work, while, at the same time, sharing expertise with other schools and with teachers in initial and in-service training.
- The local authority knows the school well and appreciates the opportunity to use its considerable knowledge and skills more widely.
- The management of the performance of staff is rigorous and ensures that further challenges are set for all staff to further improve their work. Any difficulties are tackled very effectively. Newer staff feel very well supported and quickly become valued members of the team.
- Training for staff is very carefully matched to their individual professional development needs as well as to ensuring that pupils' learning and well-being are at the forefront.
- The school's 'Foundation Stones', which set down the key expectations for learning, thinking, relationships and communication, provide a very secure basis for developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as ensuring their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum is very carefully designed to give a flexible response to the needs of all the pupils, while at the same time, challenging pupils to try new and varied experiences. This has a highly positive effect on the pupils' progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- Almost all parents, who gave a view, are extremely pleased with the school's work. They greatly appreciate the range of ways in which the school supports them with their child's special educational needs and seeks to keep them informed about their child's progress.
- The school has an established history of promoting pupils' physical and sporting skills and is using the primary school sports funding to further enhance and develop the varied opportunities it provides. This contributes very well to pupils' well-being and enjoyment.
- Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough and fully meet government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an excellent knowledge of the work of the school based on regular visits, detailed reports provided by the headteacher and through its own research and expertise. New governors receive a helpful induction pack which gives a clear overview of their responsibilities. Careful financial management ensures that the school's resources, including additional funds, such as for sport or the pupil premium are used to best effect. The governing body has taken the initiative in requesting detailed information about pupils' achievement, so that its members can be confident that all pupils make the best possible progress. Similarly, the governing body ensures that promotion and pay increases are only awarded where teaching is of the highest quality.

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	107171
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	428833

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	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Tunnard
Headteacher	Avril Young
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2011
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