

Rocklands School

Purcell Avenue, Lichfield, WS13 7PH

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The new headteacher’s enthusiasm and drive in leading her team has helped to make significant improvements in a short time.
- The headteacher and her leadership team, supported by governors, have worked hard to analyse and use data to improve teaching and learning.
- Pupils make at least good progress and some are now making outstanding progress.
- Parents appreciate the education and care provided by the school and describe it as ‘brilliant’.
- The Early Years provision is good with pupils making at least good progress in their learning and social skills. There is a wide range of interesting learning activities both indoors and outside.
- Pupils settle down to learn very quickly and difficult behaviours are managed extremely successfully.
- The staff team work well together to provide a bright welcoming school where each child is well cared for and safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- It is too early to see the full impact of the headteacher’s improvements.
- Although teaching is mainly good, elements of teaching still require improvement, and not enough is outstanding.
- Teachers do not always use the assessment information they have to improve learning.
- The marking policy is not used consistently so that pupils are not always aware of what they need to learn next and how to improve their work.
- At times there is insufficient focus on learning while care needs are being met.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which 13 were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Some short visits were also made to lessons. Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed them at break and lunch time.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers, pupils and talked with some parents. The lead inspector also held discussions with governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The team considered the school's recent parental survey (43 responses). There were insufficient responses to the online parent view survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons, together with a range of documents. These included information on keeping pupils safe, school improvement and self evaluation documentation and data on pupil's progress.

Inspection team

Rosemary Mackenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rocklands is a primary special school for pupils with severe, moderate, profound and complex learning difficulties, many of whom are on the autistic spectrum.
- There are two separate classes for pupils with the most complex autistic needs and a separate group in the mornings for those with the most complex and profound learning needs.
- The school shares its campus with the Gateway Nursery which is managed by the governors and senior leadership team of Rocklands. Charnwood Primary School, Lichfield Dyslexia Centre, Families First and the Children's Centre are also on this site.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2013.
- The school provides outreach support, on behalf of the local authority, for pupils with special educational needs in local mainstream schools.
- Pupils attend the school from Lichfield and surrounding areas. The majority are White British.
- Approximately a third of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This is extra funding to help pupils in this school who are looked after by the local authority or eligible for free school meals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching outstanding by ensuring that:
 - the best practise in assessment is consistently used to improve learning
 - the marking policy is consistently applied so that pupils have clear, accessible information about what they need to learn next
 - there is a sharper focus on learning, alongside care, for the least-able pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils, including the most able, make good progress over time given their low starting points and additional learning needs. Following the recent changes and high expectations of the leadership team, progress is accelerating rapidly and is sometimes outstanding.
- These changes include careful collection and analysis of information about progress alongside a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The leadership team has analysed their data carefully and has put in place strategies to improve progress for individual pupils and in identified subjects. Inspectors could see the early impact of these changes in science and physical education. For example pupils were concentrating and balancing particularly well in gymnastics.
- Pupils make at least good progress. They settle down to learning quickly and enjoy their learning, particularly those that are interesting and relevant.
- However, there are times where the quality of teaching requires improvement and progress slows. Occasionally the care and learning needs of pupils are not balanced appropriately with time for learning and this limits progress.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in the Early Years Foundation Stage where precise planning and assessment accelerates learning. The range of activities encourages the pupils to join in with enthusiasm and good progress in communication, language, mathematical, physical and social skills was evident during the inspection.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make at least good progress in English and mathematics. This is because additional communication and language support has been provided alongside extra activities such as horse riding, dance, early morning club and individual learning support for pupils.
- Leaders have carefully considered how to best use primary school sport funding. They have employed specialist sports coaches and commenced a specialist physical development programme for those with significant physical disabilities. Staff have had additional sports training and there are two after school sports clubs available.

The quality of teaching is good

- The majority of teaching is good with well-planned learning which interests the pupils. This is because the staff are enthusiastic and committed to improving and providing suitable learning opportunities.
- Teaching is also good because difficult behaviours are managed effectively and pupils settle down quickly to learn. Sometimes children with more complex needs are taught separately to enable their learning needs to be met.
- The high expectations of the leadership, alongside training, the use of precise assessment data, a new marking policy and lesson plan format are all helping to improve teaching and learning.

- However these changes are not yet consistently applied and pupils are not aware of the next steps they need to take in their learning. For example their learning targets are high on the classroom walls and too small to be used by the pupils themselves.
- Where elements of teaching require improvement assessment information is not used carefully to enable pupils to do even better. Consequently, pupil engagement dips and opportunities to develop thinking and learning skills are missed.
- On occasion the staff focused too much on the care needs of the pupils and were not sufficiently aware of how pupils could improve their learning. Very occasionally pupils wait too long for their turn and they lose their interest in learning.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good as teaching is precise and based on a very thorough understanding and assessment of individual pupils' learning needs. There is a broad range of very well planned activities to extend all areas of development. Pupils particularly enjoyed exploring equipment and books in the exploratory play session; they participated enthusiastically in story telling and conversations with adults.
- Teaching assistants have good relationships with the pupils, manage complex behaviours, and provide effective support for learning.
- English and mathematics are taught well, however the newly introduced reading schemes have not yet had time to make a significant impact. Pupils are not aware of how to improve their own reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are happy, enthusiastic and settle down quickly to learn. They can work for short spells on their own. Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- Pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, behave well around the school and in lessons and those with behavioural problems on entry quickly learn what is expected of them.
- This is because staff have high expectations of good conduct and skilled approaches to managing challenging behaviour. They work closely with parents, health and social care. There have been no exclusions for many years. All parents in the survey report that their child is safe and well cared for.
- Pupils report that there is no bullying and know what to do if they are upset. They are aware of e-safety. They say that they feel safe and secure and like the extra help the staff give them. In the survey no parents raised bullying as a concern.
- In the school council pupils say they are listened to and have discussed fighting, bullying, charity fund raising and visited another school to choose new playground equipment.
- Behaviour is not outstanding as pupils' attitudes to learning are not of a consistently high standard in all lessons and subjects.
- The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is good. The school is active in identifying risk and unsafe situations to ensure that the pupils are kept safe. All statutory requirements to

keep students safe are met.

- Pupils arrive and leave school in a safe orderly manner.
- All safety documentation is clear and training is up to date. Governors keep a close watch on the safety of pupils around the premises and playgrounds.
- Attendance is high. This is supported by effective strategies to ensure that pupils continue to attend so well.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has improved rapidly since the appointment of the new headteacher. She has a very clear vision for improvement and knows what to do to make the school outstanding. She is supported by a very able senior leadership team and committed governing body.
- Subject and other leaders are equally enthusiastic and are busy working with the headteacher to bring about rapid changes. They say that there is now a structured approach to improving the school and they are accountable for their actions. They are particularly pleased that teaching assistants' skills have been improved through joint training and this is having a positive impact in the classroom.
- The leadership team has invested considerable time and effort in producing and using progress data that help them to provide the correct training and support for staff. It is also used to identify suitable interventions for individual pupils as well as improve subjects. For example the long term plans were looked at for science to ensure that all pupils covered a wider range of science topics and this is improving science results.
- The school has a clear vision for its future and has a thorough understanding of what it needs to do to improve. Improvement plans are rigorous and useful.
- There is very good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage with close links with the Gateway Nursery which is also managed by the assistant headteacher. Pupil documentation including assessment and 'learning journey' books are impressive and thorough. Arrangements for transfer between the Nursery and Reception class are excellent with staff and pupil exchanges.
- Pupils of all ages have broad, suitable and appropriate opportunities for learning. There are regular trips and visits out with a particular focus on extending learning. For example two classes were excitedly exploring old and new toys following a trip to the 'Think Tank'. They were able to identify which materials they were made of and if the toys were from the past or present day. Pupils were enthusiastic and engaged.
- Arrangements for moving to secondary schools are very thorough and careful. Visits start in Year 5. There are exchanges of staff and pupils and the headteacher visits during the autumn term to check that everyone has settled.
- The school makes excellent provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education through a range of activities, visits and visitors into school. For example the Chair of Governors had been involved in the school choir singing in the Lichfield Arts Festival and pupils are preparing for a dance production in the local theatre.

- The local authority adviser knows the school extremely well and has been working in partnership with the new headteacher to lead the strong drive for improvement. The local authority has been particularly helpful in providing support for behaviour management training, stronger governance and reading.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides effective support to the headteacher in her drive to improve the school.
- Governors have undertaken training and identified how to improve governance to provide more challenge and gain more direct information from the school and parents. For example they recently worked with the staff on a school improvement day to provide information for school self evaluation and improvement.
- They are aware of the pupil premium and how it is being used in school.
- The governors have good systems for performance management and make sure that the school meets current requirements and know that teachers' pay and performance are related.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet all statutory 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	124517
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	431146

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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gwyneth Hodge
Headteacher	Sandra Swift
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2011
Telephone number	01543 510760
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