

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 March 2018

Ms Urmilla Choubae
Headteacher
Rowhill School
York Road
Aldershot
Hampshire
GU11 3JG

Dear Ms Choubae

Short inspection of Rowhill School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Catherine Davies, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has had a very turbulent time since the last inspection. The local authority and the management committee are clear that you took over a school in September in 2016 that was far from good. You have worked with great speed, diligence and determination to make vital improvements to the work of the school. Staff recruitment is now safe. Pupils behave well and take pride in their appearance and their school.

You have galvanised the staff team, including your new senior leadership team. You have raised expectations of pupils and staff and ensured that everyone shares your vision and ambition. The local authority, management committee, staff, parents and carers are unified in their view that you have transformed the quality of education at Rowhill. As one parent exemplifies: 'The changes that have been made, such as school uniform introduction, have had a very positive effect. The new team led by the head and deputy head have turned the school around.'

The local authority acted swiftly to bring about significant changes in leadership and management and governance. It ensured that highly experienced and knowledgeable governors joined the management committee. Officers from the local authority worked intensively alongside you last year because of the multitude of human resource and financial management issues you had to tackle. The local authority holds you in the highest regard and is 'in awe' of what you have achieved in a short space of time.

Rowhill is a vibrant and purposeful place to learn. Pupils are smartly presented in their uniform and focused in lessons. Pupils who are highly vulnerable make strong progress in their personal development. Relationships between adults and pupils are exemplary. There are high levels of mutual respect and the highest expectations of pupils' behaviour. Adults show great warmth towards pupils. Pupils are happy at school and feel well supported, including those who have protected characteristics. Pupils recognise the positive difference Rowhill makes to their behaviour.

Leaders know the school well. You are clear regarding the many strengths the school now has and what could be even better. For example, you have prioritised pupils' social and moral development because you wanted to rapidly improve pupils' behaviour in school. You recognise that pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding is less well developed. You know that your home tutoring service is having a significant positive impact on the most vulnerable pupils, including in helping pupils reintegrate into a school environment. However, you also recognise that pupils' overall attendance levels could be even better.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has taken clear and decisive action to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The recruitment of staff is now safe. Leaders and the management committee are well trained and ensure that all checks on the suitability of staff, including those who work with agencies, are appropriate. Over time, you have made swift and appropriate referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

You have created a culture based on the 'it could happen here' mantra. Subsequently, staff are very well attuned to listening to and watching pupils and recording any concerns they have regarding their well-being. Leaders respond appropriately to these concerns. Communications with families and other professionals are well documented. Leaders work very effectively with partner schools, where pupils are also registered to attend, to make sure that everyone knows and understands their role in keeping pupils safe.

All parents feel that staff and leaders at Rowhill listen and respond to their concerns. All staff feel that pupils are safe. Almost all pupils feel safe. A very small number of younger pupils do not always feel that the oldest pupils are kind. However, all pupils do feel that adults will intervene and help them. The low number of racist and homophobic comments are diligently recorded and swiftly dealt with.

Inspection findings

- During this visit, inspectors evaluated: pupils' progress in mathematics; the impact leaders have had on pupils' behaviour; pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and Rowhill's impact on pupils' engagement in learning.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. Staff have good subject knowledge

and value the opportunities they have to teach alongside mainstream colleagues in partner schools. Assessment information is used very well. Staff are clear about the gaps that pupils may have in their knowledge and understanding. As a result, planned learning meets pupils' needs well.

- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. Staff, the local authority and the management committee report that pupils' behaviour in and around the school has improved significantly in the last 18 months. Records indicate that exclusion levels have reduced dramatically. Pupils recognise the improvements in their behaviour since attending Rowhill. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the difference the school is making to their children.
- Pupils' social and moral development is exceptional. Staff and leaders are very good role models who set high standards. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is well planned. Pupils get wide-ranging opportunities to think and debate, including topics such as media portrayals of teenagers, anxiety, gender-neutral toilets, and parents' right to smack children. Staff create classroom environments where pupils feel safe to express their opinions and views. Pupils can hold honest and frank exchanges with each other and remain respectful. Staff do appropriately question and challenge pupils' viewpoints. However, pupils' cultural and spiritual understanding is less well developed. Pupils do not have enough regular opportunities to learn and understand about other faiths and cultures.
- Rowhill has a positive impact on pupils' re-engagement with learning, including those who have been out of education for a while. Home tutoring is effective in helping pupils make a gradual transition from home to school. These most vulnerable pupils feel very well supported. Pupils with chronically low levels of attendance are beginning to come to school more often. The number of pupils who are not authorised to be absent is decreasing. However, overall levels of pupil absence remain high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' levels of attendance continue to improve
- pupils' spiritual and cultural development is further enhanced to make sure that they are even better prepared for life after Rowhill.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, senior leaders and representatives of the management committee to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Senior leaders accompanied us on visits to a number of classes. We evaluated a range of information regarding pupils' progress, and spoke to a representative of the local authority. We met middle leaders, spoke to staff and evaluated 21 questionnaire responses. We spoke to pupils around the school, and during lunchtime, and reviewed 11 questionnaire responses. We scrutinised 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the free-text comments. We checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those relating to recruitment.