

The Robert Ogden School

Clayton Lane, Thurnscoe, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S63 0BG

Inspection dates

13–15 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school. Leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Since the last inspection, middle leaders have increased the role they play in supporting senior leaders in bringing about improvement. This has contributed to the quality of teaching and learning remaining good.
- Senior leaders have very recently carried out a thorough review of the school curriculum. This has resulted in a new and bold curriculum that accurately meets the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Students who attend the school's sixth form make good progress in line with others in the school.
- Teachers and support staff understand pupils well. They are skilled at recognising the triggers that can cause pupils to become distressed. As a result, behaviour in classrooms is good overall.
- However, sometimes teaching assistants do not support pupils' learning as well as they support pupils' behaviour. When this happens, pupils' learning slows.
- A new system for checking pupils' progress has been introduced which sets challenging targets for pupils across the school. School data aligns with inspectors' findings that pupils are making good progress overall.
- Most-able pupils make less effective progress in mathematics because they have insufficient opportunities to use their knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe and happy in school. Comments such as: 'I love coming to school' and 'I enjoy learning' reflect the views of many pupils.
- Trustees liaise regularly and effectively with school leaders in order to support the smooth running of the school.
- The school website displays two different safeguarding policies for pupils. One is a generic company policy and the other bespoke to the school. Having two similar policies has led to confusion for parents and others.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils, by:
 - ensuring that teaching assistants focus on supporting pupils' learning as well as they do on improving their behaviour
 - ensuring that work set for the most able pupils in mathematics offers sufficient opportunities for them to use and apply their knowledge and skills to solve problems effectively.
- Ensure that leaders and trustees closely monitor the school's website to make certain that required policies displayed on the website are clear and accessible to parents and others.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Trustees and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- The leadership team has a clear understanding of what is needed to move the school forward. The well-researched and thoughtful approach leaders have taken to revising the curriculum demonstrates this well.
- The role middle leaders play in supporting the leadership team has increased and developed since the previous inspection. Middle leaders described to inspectors how they have brought about changes in their own and other subject areas to meet the needs of the current cohort of pupils. For example, middle leaders have recently increased the amount of time they spend carrying out checks on how the curriculum is taught within their subject area.
- The newly developed curriculum offers pupils three different routes, dependent on their levels of need. For example, lower-ability pupils are offered a curriculum based on developing life skills and basic skills in English and mathematics. All pupils who stay on to the sixth form undertake work experience in a wide variety of settings which prepares them well for the next stage in their education or training.
- Primary-aged pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities, including sport and trips away from the classroom. During the inspection, a group of primary pupils visited a local countryside park. The focus of the visit was to develop both their understanding of different landscapes and their social skills in a range of environments. Pupils responded calmly to being surrounded by a group of very large and exuberant water birds. This demonstrated how much progress pupils have made in learning how to react in new and unknown situations since joining the school.
- The school receives very little pupil premium funding. However, it has been successful in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the same strong progress as other pupils during their time in the school.
- School leaders have put in place an effective development plan which clearly identifies areas for improvement. This document enables leaders to plot a clear pathway which is moving the school forward.
- The school has recognised expertise in supporting the needs of pupils with pathological demand avoidance (PDA), a condition which is not yet fully recognised by medical practitioners. The condition is recognised by The National Autistic Society (NAS) as having strong links to autism. A growing list of pupils with this condition are waiting to join the school from across the county and beyond. School leaders have put in place a successful approach to meeting the needs of these pupils, which includes one-to-one support for pupils in a monitored environment. The success of this approach can be measured by the high proportion of pupils who have PDA making a successful return to working alongside others in the classroom.
- Through many and varied trips away from the classroom, as well as themes covered in assemblies, pupils learn about diversity and the need to be good citizens. By recycling clothes and through whole-school curriculum days devoted to different themes, pupils

learn about the needs and customs of others. As a result, pupils develop a clear understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy and the rule of law as well as the moral duty of supporting others.

- Some effective challenge for senior leaders comes from the school improvement partner based at the school, who also works across a range of NAS schools.

Governance

- Through regular discussions with the principal and other members of the leadership team, the trustees develop a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school.
- Discussions during the inspection with the school's link trustee also demonstrated the trustees' strong support for the work of the school and senior leaders.
- Trustees are currently in the process of recruiting a director of education to bring a further level of accountability to senior leaders and will continue to support school development.

Safeguarding

- The school website contains three safeguarding policies, all of which are effectively written and demonstrate the charity's commitment to keeping pupils and staff safe. There are two policies which refer to pupils. One is the overarching NAS policy which details company policy. The second is the school's own bespoke policy which meets the requirements of the legislation including, 'Keeping children safe in education'. The presence of two policies on the website is confusing, and may cause difficulties, particularly for parents in identifying the relevant policy. Senior leaders recognise this and are planning to take action to reduce potential confusion.
- School leaders foster a clear ethos of safeguarding across the school. The school self-evaluation document demonstrates the school leaders' strong understanding of the issues which many pupils face.
- Staff are clear about the school's policies and processes in relation to safeguarding. Regular training ensures that their knowledge and understanding of recent safeguarding issues are kept up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and support staff understand the needs of pupils well. Pupils feel accepted and respected and this leads to positive relationships in the classroom.
- Staff have good subject knowledge overall. This, combined with their skills in understanding pupils' needs, ensures that pupils make good progress across the curriculum.
- Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, key stage 2 pupils were observed reading together and listening attentively to comments made by each other. Considering the high level of needs of individual pupils, this represented good progress.

- Teachers have adapted their practice quickly and effectively to meet the needs of the new curriculum. The organisation of pupils into different curricula dependent on their range of ability has enabled staff to focus more closely on planning learning for a more narrow range of ability. Initial data shows that this approach has increased the progress made by most pupils from their starting points.
- Staff are skilled at giving focused and relevant feedback to pupils. Much of the feedback given in lessons is oral, with an emphasis on praise. This enables pupils to improve their work and to remain on task.
- Parents feel their children are well taught and make good progress. Parents praise staff and are particularly impressed by the good levels of communication between home and school.
- Because of the high levels of need and vulnerability of many of the pupils, there is often a high ratio of staff to pupils in each classroom. While this often makes the management of pupils' behaviour easier, teaching assistants do not always support pupils' learning as effectively as they might.
- Senior leaders are aware that some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in English. Although pupils are often quick to learn new skills and knowledge in mathematics, they are not able to use and apply these skills effectively when solving problems. Plans are in place to introduce a mastery approach to mathematics teaching in order to deepen pupils' skills and knowledge; however, this has not yet happened.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils often arrive at the school with low self-esteem and in some cases a disillusionment with education. These attitudes are often drawn from not having not been successful in other settings.
- Staff are well trained in dealing with the needs of these pupils. Close working partnerships with speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and educational psychologists also help and support pupils. This multi-disciplinary approach enables pupils to settle into the nurturing environment of school and to enjoy learning, sometimes for the first time.
- Pupils spoken to by inspectors during the inspection commented on how much they enjoyed coming to school. Comments included: 'Staff really understand me and help me to make sense of things' and 'I feel I have a future now and work experience has helped me to choose a career'.
- Through activities such as anti-bullying week, pupils learn how to stay safe and what to do should they be a victim of bullying. Pupils also reported that very little bullying happens in school. The school's records confirm this.
- Pupils often show caring attitudes to each other and visitors. Inspectors observed pupils' polite attitudes in corridors and classrooms.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Despite pupils' very high levels of need, classrooms are most often calm and enable purposeful learning to take place.
- Pupils clearly enjoy visits to the on-site café. Classes go in rotation to develop pupils' social skills further and to enjoy a home-cooked snack or homemade milkshake.
- Pupils of all abilities and with differing levels of need come together each morning for assembly. Pupils clearly enjoy the set routine that assembly offers. The same music and video presentation are played each morning for half a term and this consistency reassures pupils and enables them to enter happily, willingly and calmly each morning.
- Attendance across the school is a little below average for similar-aged pupils. However, several pupils have mental health needs and the attendance of this group is often low. Individual pupils increase their attendance, often significantly. For example, some pupils that had been out of education for more than a year reach 100% attendance once they have settled in this school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils who attend the school have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils' levels of attainment range widely from a small group who are on course to complete GCSEs to those whose development is pre-verbal. Some also have additional needs including social, emotional and mental health needs or learning difficulties.
- School leaders' new curriculum has three pathways. Each pathway is designed to meet the needs of a different pupil group. For example, pathway one is specifically designed for pupils who arrive in school functioning between P levels one and four. This group, alongside others, are set challenging targets. Their small steps of progress are closely measured and the work planned is securely based on their previous progress.
- School data for this term shows that pupils overall are making stronger progress in English than in mathematics. Last year's data, based on the old curriculum, showed that pupils made better progress in mathematics than English. In line with the new curriculum, leaders have put in place a new way of checking pupils' progress which sets higher targets.
- Leaders feel that the new targets have increased the progress pupils are expected to make but this has yet to be reflected in the information recorded. Work in pupils' files demonstrates strong progress from a variety of different starting points.
- Current data shows that pupils in key stage 2 make slightly stronger progress than those in key stages 3 and 4. A small group of pupils in key stage 1 are making the strongest progress overall. However, pupil numbers for each year group and key stage are small.
- Most-able pupils are making slightly less progress than others, particularly in mathematics. This is because they do not have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to problem-solving activities.
- The school directly receives only a small amount of pupil premium funding for

disadvantaged pupils. This is because some local authorities use the funding to pay for the pupil's place at the school. However, school leaders ensure that the small group of disadvantaged pupils are making good progress overall.

Sixth form provision

Good

- All students who attend the school's sixth form have attended the school's secondary school. This contributes to the smooth transition experienced by most students.
- The leadership of the sixth form is carried out by the senior leadership team and the same strong vision and values are present as in the rest of the school. For example, the quality of teaching and learning are monitored in the same way as other areas of the school and this has ensured that outcomes for students remain good.
- Students spoken to by inspectors say how much they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour and mature attitudes. For example, students run the school café and show exceptionally mature and professional attitudes when serving their peers and visitors.
- The sixth-form provision is clearly focused on promoting students' personal development and life skills as well as ensuring that they leave with academic accreditations. For example, English and mathematics skills are practised through work experience in the school's on-site café.
- Nearly all students who attend the sixth form undertake work experience and make a contribution to the community. Work experience opportunities are sought in a wide variety of locations including retail stores, a steam museum, a city farm and a local hospital. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken to ensure students' safety and welfare. Photographic evidence and positive feedback from employers demonstrated the effectiveness of these placements and the valuable contribution they make towards students' successful transition to the next stage in their education or the workplace.
- Last year, students left school with a range of accreditations including level 1 and 2 mathematics and English qualifications as well as a range of vocational accreditations. All of these were closely tailored to the needs of each pupil.
- Last year, nearly all students made a successful transition to an educational setting or on to an apprenticeship scheme. Students were supported in their choices by suitable information, advice and careers guidance.

School details

Unique reference number	106965
DfE registration number	370/6004
Inspection number	10043653

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The National Autistic Society
Headteacher	Lorraine Dormand
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,100
Telephone number	01709 874443
Website	www.robertogdenschool.org.uk
Email address	robert.ogden@nas.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school is one of several schools run by NAS and caters for the needs of up to 165 pupils, the vast majority of whom have autistic spectrum disorder and other associated special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school is a residential special school which offers a small number of pupils 38-week residential placements in a residential unit approximately one mile away from the school site. A further residential unit is situated on the school site. It offers both short break and up to 38-week placements for up to four pupils.

- Most pupils who attend the school come from the locality. Others come from local authorities within the north of England.
- Currently, the school's governance is carried out by a board of trustees responsible for administering NAS.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The school was last inspected on 3 February 2015.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was aligned with a social care inspection. Two separate reports have been produced.
- The education inspection team observed learning in classrooms across the school and accompanied two primary classes on an off-site visit.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, a member of the board of trustees, middle leaders, pupils and staff.
- Learning in classrooms was observed across the school by inspectors and senior leaders. Inspectors toured the school and completed a range of other activities to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documents including safeguarding procedures, curriculum documentation, and a range of policies pertinent to the running of the school.
- The inspection team took into account responses from 37 members of staff to Ofsted's questionnaire. Inspectors also considered the feedback from 16 parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Chaffey

Ofsted Inspector

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