

# Rotunda Ltd

109–115 Great Mersey Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool, Merseyside L5 2PL

## Inspection dates

10–12 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Systems to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for are firmly established. However, systems to ensure that pupils make good progress in lessons are not as effective.
- The progress that pupils make across subjects is inconsistent. Pupils do not make as strong progress in mathematics as they do in English. Teachers are not clear about the standards that they expect pupils to reach by the end of their placement in the school.
- The systems that leaders and managers use to monitor the progress that pupils make are underdeveloped. Leaders are unable to identify quickly when a pupil starts to underachieve or when pupils are not performing well in a particular subject.
- Leaders do not have good systems in place to evaluate accurately how well the school is functioning. Leaders are not clear about what the school does well. This has resulted in the school accepting some pupils for whom the school was unsuitable. In these cases, pupils left the school before the end of their placement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils learn to trust staff very quickly. With considerable expertise, staff identify pupils' social and emotional needs. Staff skilfully meet these needs and promote pupils' mental health very effectively. This transforms pupils' attitudes to themselves and to their learning.
- Around school and in lessons, pupils behave very well. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, justice and injustice.
- Systems to protect pupils are highly effective. Pupils are taught how to recognise a diverse range of dangerous situations and how to cope with them.
- Many pupils start at Rotunda with records of poor attendance. Pupils quickly begin to appreciate what Rotunda staff do for them. Pupils feel secure and valued. They begin to develop a belief that they can achieve academically. Over time, pupils' attendance improves considerably.
- Leaders have ensured that the school complies with the independent school standards.
- Leaders modify the curriculum well to meet the needs and aspirations of pupils.

### 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?

- Reduce the number of pupils who leave the school before the end of their placement by developing a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and which pupils are likely to benefit from attending Rotunda Ltd.
- Develop effective systems to:
  - set clear and aspirational expectations of pupils' achievement
  - quickly identify where pupils make weak progress and respond promptly.
- Capitalise on recent improvements to the teaching of mathematics to ensure that the progress pupils make in mathematics is as strong as it is in English.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The principal and proprietorial board have opened a school which dovetails with the principles and aspirations of the wider Rotunda Ltd charity. They have ensured that staff are dedicated to helping pupils in the north Liverpool community to have a successful start to their adult lives.
- Despite their good intentions, leaders have not ensured that the school offers pupils a good education. The school caters well for pupils' care, well-being and personal development. However, leaders have not been systematic in their approach to developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have not established systems for evaluating the quality of teaching effectively. They are over-reliant on anecdotal evidence when judging the effectiveness of teaching. Furthermore, leaders have not developed systems that enable them to evaluate the amount of progress that pupils make. As a result, leaders are not able to identify when pupils need extra support or when the teaching of a particular subject or topic requires refinement.
- In contrast, leaders have been thorough in their approach to catering for pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. They have established effective procedures that enable most pupils to settle quickly to the school. They have also ensured that staff manage pupils' behaviour well and that most pupils improve their conduct and attitudes while at the school. Most pupils grow in confidence and self-belief. They develop ambitions for their future. All pupils currently in Year 11 have secured appropriate places at a range of colleges for the next academic year.
- Leaders have not established effective mechanisms for evaluating the school's effectiveness. As a result, they have been unclear of the school's strengths and which pupils would benefit from the service that they provide. About a quarter of the pupils who started a programme at Rotunda during the current academic year did not complete it successfully. Leaders have reflected on this and feel that most of these placements broke down because these pupils started their schooling at Rotunda too late into their education. Leaders therefore feel that they had too little time to make a positive impact on their lives. As a result of these challenges, leaders are beginning to develop an understanding of what they do well and what they can provide.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are assessed accurately and thoroughly when they join the school. The school often receives an incomplete picture of the pupils starting with them when they receive referrals from local schools and local authorities. However, staff quickly and accurately assess pupils' needs, especially those relating to their well-being. Pupils also complete tests that provide staff with information on what they already know, understand and can do.
- Despite the effectiveness of systems for assessing pupils on entry to the school, leaders have not ensured that staff have a clear understanding of what pupils are expected to achieve at the school. Furthermore, leaders have not established appropriate strategies for evaluating the progress that pupils make. Consequently, leaders are unable to evaluate with any precision what pupils have achieved by the end of their time at the school.

- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a variety of ways. One strategy used extensively by staff is to encourage discussion and conversation. Staff ask pupils thoughtful questions that often challenge their thinking. In response, pupils offer considered opinions that demonstrate a strong moral code and a desire for social justice. The school's work in this area helps pupils to develop a keen interest in world events and how democratic and legal systems work in other countries as well as in the United Kingdom.
- Pupils follow a curriculum that meets their needs. All pupils spend a significant proportion of their time improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils also study other aspects of the curriculum required by the independent school standards. Teachers take opportunities to personalise the curriculum, often following the interests of individual pupils. This increases the engagement of pupils in their learning and enables some to excel in subjects such as art.
- Leaders strengthen pupils' commitment to the local community by involving them in local events such as arts and music festivals. Staff also seek opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences through a range of trips and visits, such as a recent trip to a local boxing club.
- Pupils benefit from highly personalised careers guidance. Staff take time to discuss pupils' aspirations. They guide pupils to suitable college courses and help them to develop the skills that are necessary to gain employment. Where possible, pupils benefit from meaningful work experience. Already, some of the current Year 10 pupils are clear about what they want to do as a career and know how to achieve this.
- Leaders have established a culture in which teachers are open to advice and keen to improve. Staff take part in training that broadens their experience and enables them to learn from their peers.
- Parents, carers and pupils are very supportive of the school. They recognise the care, support and encouragement that staff give to pupils. Some parents describe the school as a 'godsend'. They also value how approachable staff are and how dedicated they are to helping their children cope with the challenges that they face.

## **Governance**

- The role of governance is undertaken by the proprietorial board.
- Governors have been instrumental in opening the school. They have provided sound financial management and clear guidance on how to manage large projects. They have acted quickly to protect open spaces around the school, which has preserved opportunities for outdoor learning and space for inspiring artistic sculptures.
- Governors have been supportive of the principal's ambition to provide a high-quality school for local children who have experienced difficulties in mainstream education. Governors are developing their understanding of how to provide challenge to the principal in order for the school to become good.

- Governors provide expertise in financial management, the development of large projects and safeguarding. The board is currently seeking to strengthen its ability to offer support on educational development with the appointment of an additional member.
- A range of suitable policies which meet current government requirements is available on the school's website, including a safeguarding policy.
- Proprietors and leaders have ensured that the school complies with the independent school standards.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that the maintenance of effective procedures and arrangements for safeguarding pupils is a key priority for the school.
- All staff receive regular safeguarding training. A large proportion of staff are trained to a high level. The induction of new staff includes arrangements for good safeguarding training.
- Staff are highly skilled in noticing subtle signs that may indicate a pupil is subject to abuse, danger or exploitation. Staff have a proven record of raising justifiable concerns with external agencies who have responsibility for ensuring that children are safe.
- Leaders are highly experienced at evaluating the potential risks that pupils are exposed to. They ensure that any concerns are carefully investigated and diligently followed up.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe and have access to a wide range of helpful agencies and supportive systems. Through discussions, pupils develop their understanding of gang culture and the potential for young people being exploited as drug 'mules' working across county lines. Pupils are aware of the impact of violence, particularly knife crime, on family life. Pupils have a good understanding of how young people can be exploited, including sexually. Pupils say that they would feel comfortable telling a member of staff if they had any worries or concerns.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable. Over the year, pupils have made the strongest progress in English and art. In these subjects, teachers are confident in their own subject knowledge and have a good understanding of the requirements of the courses that pupils follow. There is evidence of pupils' skills in English being developed systematically. All pupils enjoy art and they improve their skills. Pupils who are talented artists excel and achieve very well. Positive encouragement is evident throughout all subjects. Teachers find opportunities to celebrate pupils' work and their achievements.
- Over time, the teaching of mathematics has not been effective. Pupils join this school with very different prior attainment in mathematics. However, until recently, there was no evidence that mathematics teaching matched the varying needs of pupils. In particular, the teaching of mathematics did not systematically develop pupils' mathematical skills. However, the teaching of mathematics has improved considerably with the appointment of a new teacher. The teaching of mathematics is now more responsive to pupils' needs. Pupils are now provided with work that builds upon their prior attainment and challenges

them to develop their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. Over the past six weeks, pupils have been much more focused on their learning and have noticeably improved their basic mathematical skills.

- The teaching of science has also recently improved. Pupils are now supported to think like scientists by posing questions, establishing hypotheses and investigating the validity of their theories. Science teaching caters effectively for the lack of specialist scientific resources and facilities.
- Pupils are being prepared to cope with the demands of external assessments, particularly those completed live on computers. This is another recent improvement in teaching. Teachers are starting to coach pupils to work under the pressure of time, in a quiet environment without recourse to advice from a teacher.
- Teachers set personalised homework tasks for pupils. These tasks often relate to pupils' aspirations and interests. The school's marking policy is not consistently applied by teachers.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Personal development and pupil welfare are the cornerstones of the school's work. Staff help pupils to settle into the school as quickly as possible. Staff take time to understand the barriers that pupils may have to learning. Staff usually have the skills to support pupils emotionally. If pupils need additional support, the school ensures that they are able to get professional counselling. Pupils can have access to the Young Persons' Advisory Service or one of a range of additional support services. All pupils spoke very highly of the support they receive from the school's mental health coordinator.
- Over time, the school is very successful in building pupils' trust. Once trust is established, pupils often develop a greater belief in themselves and their own abilities. Staff help pupils to cope with the difficulties that they face in their lives. This supports pupils and helps them to improve their learning.
- Staff provide excellent support to help pupils improve their physical and mental health. Staff also help pupils to develop strategies to deal with difficult and potentially dangerous situations.
- Pupils who have experienced bullying in their lives said that the school has helped them considerably in being able to rebuild their self-esteem. All pupils said that, within the school environment, there is very little bullying. Pupils said that they do not tolerate any unpleasantness among their peers. They also appreciate the manner in which staff intervene to prevent the escalation of any minor disagreements.
- Leaders aspire for all pupils to become resilient and self-reliant. In particular, they aim to equip all pupils with the ability to manage independently the problems that have prevented them from learning well in the past. Leaders have not realised this ambition, because they recognise that pupils still rely heavily on support from staff.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils usually join Rotunda with a recent history of poor behaviour or non-attendance in their previous school. Many have been enrolled in a number of secondary schools. Pupils' behaviour in and around Rotunda is good. In lessons, most are enthusiastic and interruptions due to poor behaviour are uncommon. Due to the effective implementation of the school's ethos, staff appear to manage behaviour with little difficulty. Pupils know that staff will do their best for them and, in turn, are keen to show them respect and try their best.
- Staff build pupils' belief that they can achieve. They also encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils, especially those who have been at the school for a long time, model good behaviour and expect others to follow.
- Pupils' attendance improves significantly upon joining the school. Most pupils have had sporadic attendance in their previous schools. Their attendance rapidly improves because most pupils value what Rotunda offers them. Despite this improvement, rates of absence are still higher than historic national averages for secondary schools.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- There are no publicly available analyses of the achievement of Rotunda's pupils. The numbers of pupils sitting external examinations are low, so statistical analysis would be unreliable.
- Pupils' achievement across subjects is variable. Progress in English is consistently good, irrespective of pupils' starting points. Once settled into the school, pupils develop their basic literacy skills quickly. Despite this, pupils' ability to read well is variable. This has a lot to do with their confidence and self-esteem. Teachers provide pupils with supportive opportunities to improve their reading.
- The progress that pupils make in mathematics is not good because, until recently, it had not been well taught. In the last six weeks, there are clear signs that pupils are beginning to make stronger progress in mathematics as a result of improved teaching.
- Some pupils excel in art. Outcomes in science are beginning to improve.
- Teachers and leaders spend much time with pupils discussing their aspirations for the future. Pupils benefit from good guidance, improved literacy and numeracy skills and greater self-belief. This all helps pupils to move successfully to the next stage of their education, which is usually to a suitable college course.

## School details

Unique reference number	144370
DfE registration number	341/6009
Inspection number	10048611

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 School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Rotunda Ltd
Chair	Philip Cashin
Headteacher	Maxine Ennis
Day fees	£49
Telephone number	0151 207 2176
Website	<a href="http://www.therotunda.org.uk">www.therotunda.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:mennis@therotunda.org.uk">mennis@therotunda.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Rotunda Ltd is a charity based in north Liverpool. It aims to support members of the local community to re-engage with education and work. The charity provides an extensive range of support services, including counselling, basic skills development, family support and mental health support. On 1 September 2017, the charity extended its provision to include a school for pupils who are struggling in mainstream education or who are not attending their mainstream school. Within the wider organisation, the school is known as Rotunda Independent School for Excellence (RISE).



- RISE is situated in the grade two-listed Georgian terrace owned by Rotunda. It comprises classrooms, office facilities, performance areas, a café and a garden.
- Pupils can attend the RISE provision full time or part time while being dual-registered with their mainstream school. The school initially prioritises building pupils' confidence, self-esteem and their attitudes towards others. Once pupils have sufficient belief in themselves, teachers begin to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and wider learning. Teachers and other support workers extend their work to include family support.
- Although the school is registered to provide sixth-form education, there are no students currently on roll above compulsory school age.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

- Throughout the inspection, the inspector worked closely with the school's principal, the organisational lead for the school, teachers and the school's mental health coordinator.
- The inspector met with one member of the proprietorial board.
- The inspector talked to pupils. The inspector spoke to individual teachers. He took account of 11 questionnaires completed by staff for the inspection. He also spoke to two parents by telephone. The inspector spoke to a representative of one of the local authorities which sends pupils to this school. There were no parental responses made to Parent View or by text for the inspector to consider.
- School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspector visited classrooms to speak with pupils, looked at their work and observed their learning. The inspector looked at pupils' work, which captured their learning over a long period of time. He observed group sessions and individual learning activities.
- Senior leaders were involved in most of the inspection activities.

## Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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