

Reddish Hall School

Denstone Road, Reddish, Stockport, Cheshire SK5 6RN

Inspection dates

26–28 March 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher is determined to continually improve the school. With the recently formed senior leadership team, the headteacher ensures that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are continually improving.
- The proprietor and governors work closely with senior leaders to ensure that safeguarding requirements are stringently met and all the independent school standards are met.
- Procedures for checking on pupils' progress are yet to be fully implemented across all subjects. In addition, the range of qualifications and work-based learning for key stage 4 pupils and students is still expanding
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils. Their positive relationships with pupils and their good classroom management support pupils' good engagement and strong progress.
- Teachers and leaders develop well pupils' appreciation of British values and successfully enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Pupils attend school regularly and say they feel safe in school. Pupils are welcoming, behave well and enjoy the many educational visits available to them.
- Records show pupils' reading is sporadic. Reading materials available are somewhat limited. Occasionally, work set in English, mathematics and science does not link closely to pupils' different skills and abilities.
- Staff morale is high. Staff enjoy working at the school and are highly appreciative of the training and development available through the Acorn Care and Education Group.
- Pupils have access to an increasing range of effective therapies. They enjoy horticulture and attending 'pet club' and benefit from regular counselling.
- Parents, carers and representatives from local authorities are highly positive about all aspects of the school. Parents say their children are safe, looked after well and making good progress.

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 and learning by:
 - making sure that pupils have access to books from a wide range of authors and practise and refine their reading skills
 - ensuring that work in English, mathematics and science is closely matched to pupils' different skills and abilities.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - implementing effective procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in all subjects
 - extending the range of qualifications available to students and pupils in key stage 4 and broadening the range of work-based learning experiences on offer.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is highly motivated and determined and has been successful in reversing the fortunes of the school. After a period of disruption to staffing, causing instability and a decline in standards, the headteacher and senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve behaviour and raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- A new behaviour policy and a system of rewards have been introduced, and new procedures for checking the performance of staff and holding them to account for pupils' achievement have been implemented. Development plans are precise and senior leaders know exactly what they need to do to secure further improvements.
- Senior leaders are aware that there is more work to be done to extend the range of qualifications and work-based learning available to students and pupils in key stage 4, an area for improvement identified from the previous inspection. In addition, leaders have made it a priority to ensure that the same effective procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science are implemented in all subjects.
- Together with the proprietor, Acorn Care and Education Group, and governors, senior leaders ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is good and all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher regularly checks on teachers' practice, and new procedures have recently been introduced to ensure that other leaders and the chair of the governing body share this responsibility. The quality of work in pupils' books and teachers' planning are regularly checked. Feedback given to teachers is clear and focused, helping them to improve their effectiveness. Teachers are set challenging improvement targets, all of which are linked to sharpening their practice and raising pupils' achievement.
- Reddish Hall staff form a very cohesive group. They benefit from tailored professional development and from opportunities to learn from good practice in other schools within the Acorn family of schools and further afield. The overwhelming majority of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire said that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their own improvement.
- Pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum, which captures their interests and supports their strong progress. Pupils enjoy exploring local areas and visiting various places of interest, including the Stockport Hat Museum and the Imperial War Museum North. Pupils' writing and mathematical skills are promoted well across the curriculum. However, work to promote and develop pupils' reading skills is not as effective as it could be.
- The small number of students who attend part-time off-site provision, to study animal care and travel and tourism, benefit from a curriculum which suits their aptitudes and abilities. School records show that these students made good progress in their chosen areas of study. In addition, they made strong progress in Reddish Hall in subjects such as English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers' work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils appreciate the basic principles of various religions and have visited different places of worship, including churches and a mosque. Pupils have a good understanding of the culturally diverse nature of British society. They enjoy pantomimes and the theatre

and like to hone their musical skills playing various percussion instruments and the ukulele.

- Pupils have a deep empathy with others, as demonstrated through their many charitable acts. They know what it means to be British and learn about the plight of asylum seekers and refugees. Pupils celebrate various commemorative events. Remembrance Day has a special poignancy for the school. Pupils pay tribute to previous pupils who fell during the First World War, and those who returned, whose names adorn the wall of the secondary school gymnasium.
- Parents and representatives from placing authorities are very positive about the school. All are of the view that children are safe, well looked after and making good progress in their learning. Some typical comments from parents included: 'Our lives have changed since my son started at Reddish Hall. I cannot thank staff enough for the great things they do.' Parents also agree that 'This is an excellent school, staff are very caring and understanding and maintain good discipline.'

Governance

- Governance is good. New governance arrangements are highly effective. The chair of the governing body has many years' experience in education and works closely with the headteacher and senior leaders. She works closely with a small core of Acorn schools to support raising standards, improve the quality of teaching and secure continuous improvements to the overall quality of provision. Other governors know the school well. They receive regular reports from senior leaders, which keep them informed about school activities and priorities for further development.
- The proprietor takes a keen interest in the school and knows exactly what senior leaders are aiming to achieve. This is evident in the support, in terms of finance and expertise, given to facilitate senior leaders' vision of providing a purpose-built vocational training centre. Several Acorn schools already have such centres, providing much experience upon which leaders can draw.
- Leaders are held to account by the governing body, which takes part in managing the headteacher's performance. Governors challenge leaders to continually raise standards. All are trained well and are fully conversant with safeguarding matters.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The school has a comprehensive and current safeguarding policy on its website.
- All staff embark on a comprehensive induction programme as soon as they start at the school. Staff sign a declaration to indicate that they have read the latest government guidelines on keeping children safe in education and the school's safeguarding and related policies.
- Pupils at the school are particularly vulnerable. The school is acutely aware that this warrants special vigilance regarding safeguarding matters. All staff have had the 'Prevent' duty and 'county lines' training, which are part of the government's strategy to reduce

radicalisation and extremism and child exploitation. The school's designated safeguarding leaders, all of whom are highly trained and at the forefront of developments relating to children's safety and welfare, are highly effective in their roles.

- Staff know exactly what to do if a pupil reports a concern. They are highly skilled in spotting signs of neglect and abuse. As the headteacher explained, 'If there is the slightest niggle about a pupil's safety, it is reported and logged.'
- All appropriate checks are made on staff to establish their suitability to work with children. Risk assessments are regularly carried out to ensure that school premises are safe and secure. In addition, school trips and educational visits are risk-assessed, helping to ensure pupils' safety. Staff are aware of risks associated with individual pupils. They work well with senior leaders to minimise such risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Across the school, teaching is good. Teachers new to the school, and to teaching, are well supported by senior leaders. As a result, they soon settle into school life and quickly improve and develop their teaching practice.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They plan activities to ensure that pupils enjoy learning, make strong progress and attain well. Teachers and teaching assistants have a thorough knowledge of pupils' individual learning needs and are conversant with each pupil's targets, as detailed in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Workbooks indicate that, occasionally, classroom activities in mathematics, English and science are not closely tailored to pupils' different skills and abilities. Work is sometimes too difficult for pupils who are still developing their basic calculation and comprehension skills. Conversely, when work is not challenging enough, the most able do not make the good progress of which they are capable.
- Across the primary and secondary schools, mathematics teaching is good. This was evident in a class where pupils were learning about Pythagoras's theorem. After a short demonstration, all pupils understood that, when added together, the square roots of the smaller sides of a right-angled triangle equal the square root of the longest side, the hypotenuse. Once pupils understood the theorem, they correctly applied it and could calculate the lengths of different vertical and horizontal lines in various triangles.
- Teachers ensure that pupils appreciate that academic subjects are linked. This was demonstrated in key stage 2. After plotting various coordinates on a map, pupils used their good knowledge of both mathematics and geography to locate the secondary school multi-use games area and various other features, such as the gardening area, on an aerial photograph of the school.
- Pupils use their good writing skills for different purposes. This was exemplified in key stage 3 as pupils prepared presentations. Demonstrating their well-developed information, communication and technology skills, some pupils created a set of survival tips to be used in the event of a zombie apocalypse, while others researched and presented facts and figures about sports cars, such as brake horsepower, cost, engine capacity and popularity.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils, whom they care about deeply. All focus on developing pupils' communication skills and their ability to

cooperate and work alongside their peers. This was evident in horticulture, where pupils enjoyed planting seeds and bulbs, nurturing saplings and harvesting the fruits of their labour. Pupils also enjoy looking after, and diligently feeding and 'mucking out', the school rabbits, guinea pigs and bearded dragon.

- Most teachers and teaching assistants give pupils useful feedback on their learning, which is helping to develop pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work in English, mathematics and other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they always feel safe in school. They say bullying is 'not an issue' and fallings-out are quickly resolved. Pupils have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying. For example, they say that racism is when 'you mock someone's race, religion or language'. They indicate that racism and other forms of bullying, such as homophobic bullying, are never tolerated.
- A strong culture of safety is evident in the school. Pupils are confident in approaching any adult at any time and securing an immediate response to their concerns. The school's own surveys, and the inspection survey, indicate that most pupils feel safe at school. Pupils are taught about different potential dangers. For example, they know how to stay safe when using the internet. They also know they should not visit websites unless they are age-appropriate. Pupils' internet use is closely monitored. Alert systems are in place should pupils attempt to view inappropriate content.
- Pupils have good entrepreneurial skills. They demonstrated their skills recently when they made bird boxes and cakes, which were sold to parents and other visitors during a coffee morning. Pupils used the money raised to cover veterinary fees incurred by the amputation of the leg of one of their pet rabbits. Oreo was soon up and running after her operation. Pupils have also raised money for various good causes, including cancer charities.
- Pupils learn about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. Visitors, some who were previously homeless and others who are recovered substance misusers, have visited the school to talk about their experiences and consolidate pupils' understanding of various safe and unsafe practices.
- Pupils benefit from impartial careers advice. This ensures that they are aware of training and employment opportunities when they leave Year 11 and 12. At the end of the academic year in 2018, all pupils went on to education, employment or further training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are at the forefront of everything staff at Reddish Hall do. Tried and tested techniques are in place to reduce pupils' anxiety and encourage their participation in learning. For example, pupils benefit from the calming

and therapeutic rewards derived from horticulture.

- Typically, behaviour in class is good. Pupils enjoy discovering new things and learning alongside their peers. They know that they can elect to spend a short period out of the classroom if they are finding it difficult to engage. School records show that pupils' engagement in lessons has improved significantly this academic year. Few want to miss out on learning.
- Teachers manage behaviour consistently well and expertly spot flashpoints and potential conflicts. They step in early to circumvent poor behaviour. Behaviour support workers, in both the primary and secondary stages, know pupils well and are effective in their roles. Support workers link effectively with the school counsellor and other staff to help pupils manage their behaviour and emotions.
- Parents who submitted text messages during the inspection, as well as those who recently completed the school's own questionnaires, have no concerns about pupils' behaviour. Representatives from placing authorities say the school is calm and purposeful. On the rare occasion disruptions occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Staff and pupils are of the view that behaviour is usually good. The school's own behaviour records, and compelling data and information, indicate that behaviour has significantly improved this year. Inspection evidence indicates that behaviour is typically good over time.
- Pupils' attendance is good. They attend school regularly because they enjoy learning and understand the relationship between regular attendance and good achievement. In addition, they like to compete for 'special visits' and awards, which take place every Friday, and aim to be included in end-of-term outings. School records show that pupils' attendance improves immediately after they start at the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils start their learning at Reddish Hall with significant gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding, having spent long periods out of education. This is shown in the assessment information held by the school. On entry, most pupils' reading, writing, calculation and verbal communication skills are below those expected for their age.
- Ongoing assessments in English, mathematics and science indicate that most pupils make good progress from their starting points, with a small minority making outstanding progress. Senior leaders are yet to implement assessment procedures to monitor pupils' progress in subjects including history, geography and art. However, workbooks show that most pupils make consistently good progress in these subjects.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is strong. Pupils have a full appreciation of the importance of mathematics in everyday life. Workbooks show that pupils regularly explore range, mode, median and mean, which they apply to various problem-solving activities. Pupils who spoke with the inspector had a good appreciation of the importance of fluent calculation skills when planning events, such as parties.
- Teachers help pupils to make strong progress in English, particularly in writing. This is evident in well-written pieces of work on subjects such as the golden age of Islam, the death of King Harold during the Battle of Hastings and life in Tudor England. Pupils'

reviews of popular films are informative and engaging.

- Pupils' information, communication and technology skills are strong, demonstrated in their well-produced word-processed work. Pupils skilfully manipulate a range of software. They use desk-top publishing packages with ease and include hyperlinks in their presentations to sustain audience interest.
- Pupils' progress in reading is not as strong as in other subjects. Some who read for the inspector did so with skill and enthusiasm. Those who found reading more difficult used their phonics skills and knowledge to sound out and read unfamiliar words. However, pupils' reading records show that reading is sporadic. In addition, pupils, including those in the secondary phase, have a somewhat limited knowledge of the work of different authors. Leaders are aware of such limitations and have recently invested in a comprehensive reading scheme, which is about to be implemented.
- Science teaching is rapidly improving. As a result, pupils make good progress in this subject. In the primary school, pupils engage in various practical investigative activities which enable them to apply their scientific knowledge. This is evident in activities exploring the properties of different materials, such as ice, metal and organic matter, and in experiments to test forces and friction in various substances.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their food technology skills and understand the importance of such skills in adult life. Pupils know that healthy eating is one of the keys to their mental and physical fitness. They have a good appreciation of the importance of kitchen safety, which they demonstrated during the inspection while making courgette and cheese muffins.
- All pupils are prepared well to acquire functional skills in English, mathematics and science, for which they are accredited through the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. A small number of pupils and students study for GCSE qualifications. In addition, pupils engage in various Outward Bound activities as part of their studies for the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award. Pupils acquire various certificates, including in food hygiene and horticulture, in recognition of their achievements in food technology and rural studies.
- There are a limited range of courses and routes to accreditation available to pupils in key stage 4. For example, pupils cannot study either art or history at GCSE. Leaders are aware of the need to broaden the curriculum in these areas and are currently reviewing provision.
- A small number of pupils spend part of their time in local schools and colleges, studying animal care and tourism and travel. School records indicate that pupils make at least good progress in their chosen vocational areas and attain well.
- The functional skills and GCSE qualifications that older pupils and students acquire in English and mathematics help to ensure their readiness for employment or further training. Pupils are well placed to be successful in the next part of their learning or in employment after leaving the school.

School details

Unique reference number	142536
DfE registration number	356/6012
Inspection number	10067930

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 school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Lauren Wright
Headteacher	Sarah Makin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,640
Telephone number	0161 442 1197
Website	www.reddishhallschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@reddishhallschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–24 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school has expanded considerably since the previous inspection. The current headteacher is a long-standing member of staff. She took up the post of headteacher recently and formed a new senior leadership team. Several teachers and teaching assistants are new to the school since the previous inspection.
- At the time of this inspection, plans were in place to establish a specialist vocational training centre for both key stage 4 and post-16 Reddish Hall pupils and students.
- Senior leaders and the proprietor aim to ensure that 'Reddish Hall School enables its pupils to improve their academic performance, develop their social skills and raise their

aspirations... providing a high-quality learning environment and delivering an exciting and innovative curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils.'

- Reddish Hall School is a co-educational school catering for pupils aged five to 18 with complex educational needs, communication difficulties and challenging behaviour. All pupils have an EHC plan. At the time of the inspection, two students were over the age of 16.
- Classes contain between four and eight pupils. There are four classes in the primary phase and five in the secondary phase. A small number of students study animal care at Works 4U College and tourism and leisure at Broadstones School.
- The school is one of more than 20 schools that are part of the Acorn Care and Education Group, which has headquarters in Bolton. Reddish Hall School is registered for 80 pupils, with the number currently on roll being 66 pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in a range of subjects, including English, science, food technology and mathematics. Pupils' work and assessment folders were scrutinised during observations and separately with the headteacher. The inspector was accompanied by the headteacher on all observations.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, the chair of the governing body, the headteacher and senior leaders. Meetings were held with parents, foster carers, representatives from commissioning authorities and other stakeholders. The inspector met with a small group of staff.
- The inspector took account of 11 staff and 10 pupil responses to the questionnaire completed during the inspection. The school's own surveys of parents' views were scrutinised, as well as six text messages submitted by parents.
- There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to be considered. A formal discussion was held with pupils. Informal discussions were held with pupils throughout the course of the inspection.
- The inspector examined a range of documentary evidence. This included pupils' EHC plans, checks on the quality of teaching and teachers' performance, and safeguarding documentation, including risk assessments. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's development plans and reviews of its own performance.
- The inspector checked various records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour and the school's records and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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