Inspection of Rowan House School

Pearce House, 80 Cawdor Street, Eccles M30 0QF

Inspection dates: 29 June–1 July 2021

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging at Rowan House School. They learn in a caring environment that builds their confidence. They trust adults who teach and support them. Staff have their best interests at heart and pupils know this.

Leaders have high expectations about what pupils can achieve. Many pupils have experienced significant trauma in their lives. Staff rightly provide specialist pastoral support to care for their complex needs. At the same time, teachers prioritise helping pupils to re-engage with learning. They expect all pupils to take part in lessons, and they do. Leaders have made it everyone's ambition for pupils to return to mainstream education. The school teaches a broad range of subjects that build pupils' knowledge in a variety of ways. This prepares them well for their next steps.

The more time that pupils spend at school, the better they become at working with others. Most pupils show respect and kindness to others. Pupils know about different types of bullying and know why it is wrong. Leaders have effective procedures in place to deal with bullying, should it arise.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have worked hard to develop and improve the curriculum since the school opened. They prioritise mathematics and English, so that pupils can more easily access other curriculum subjects. Teachers have identified the essential knowledge that they expect pupils to learn. They use curriculum plans that set out lessons in a logical order. This helps pupils to build the knowledge and skills that they need to make progress. However, planning in some subjects, such as art, is not yet fully developed.

Teachers make careful checks on what each pupil knows and can do when they first join the school. This is important because many pupils have had their education disrupted for long periods of time in the past. Teachers use this assessment information to produce an individual education plan (IEP) for each pupil. These IEPs are precise and include small-step targets that build over time. Teachers regularly check the progress that pupils make against these targets. They then adjust curriculum plans so that lessons match pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils quickly begin to remember more and know more. This helps them to catch up on lost learning.

Leaders prioritise reading. They ensure that teachers who deliver phonics lessons have expert subject knowledge. However, not all staff have benefited from appropriate training. Pupils know and remember the letters and sounds that they have learned. They practise regularly and become better readers. In addition, adults read regularly to pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically about stories that they have heard. Leaders have introduced many ideas to promote a love of reading. For instance, they give books as gifts to pupils when they move to their new schools.

They have also provided a school library that is full of bright and appealing books. Pupils are proud of the library and often take books to read in their own time.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are rarely absent. They pay attention and work hard in most lessons. However, occasionally, pupils can lose their focus and become disruptive. Staff know what to do if this happens. They are skilful in attending to pupils' emotional needs and quickly refocus pupils back on their work.

Leaders place great emphasis on preparing pupils for the future. They arranged for a careers adviser, for instance, to visit the school and answer questions about the jobs that people do. Pupils enjoy these sessions. They have many ideas about things they want to do in the future.

Teachers use lessons in many subjects to teach about respect and tolerance for others. Pupils learn about people who are different from them. For example, in physical education, pupils played wheelchair basketball. This helped them understand what life might be like for people with disabilities. In addition, adults encourage pupils to make a positive contribution to the local community. For instance, pupils write letters to residents of a local care home.

Pupils are very proud of the responsibilities they have been given. All pupils are developing an understanding of the democratic process through being school councillors. The school council meets weekly to share opinions. The pupils have suggested several ideas to the headteacher. Leaders listen to what pupils tell them. Then they implement changes to make the school a better place.

The body of proprietors works well with the director of education to hold school leaders to account. They have high expectations and communicate them clearly to school leaders. The director of education makes regular visits to the school and checks the impact of leaders' work. The strategic vision of the proprietorial body is helping to ensure that pupils receive a good quality of education. It has made certain that the independent school standards are met. The school has a safeguarding policy that has regard to the latest government guidance, and is available to parents and carers on request.

Leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make thorough checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. They provide high-quality training for staff before allowing them to start working at the school. Staff are vigilant and alert to the signs of abuse. They know what to do if they have concerns.

Pupils are supervised at all times. As a result, they feel safe. Teachers plan lessons to show pupils how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about e-safety. They know how to protect themselves from potential harm when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is planned and sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what was learned before. However, this is not fully the case in all subjects. This leads to gaps in what pupils know and remember. Leaders should continue to develop curriculum planning to ensure that pupils know and remember more in all subjects over time.
- Not all staff have the knowledge that they require to teach phonics well. This may lead to ineffective teaching when more pupils join the school. Leaders should provide additional support and development to staff to ensure that they all know how to teach phonics well.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

School details

Unique reference number	147985
DfE registration number	861/6023
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10195139
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Halliwell Homes Ltd
Chair	Karen Mitchell-Mellor
Headteacher	Georgina Fletcher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,250
Telephone number	0161 437 9491
Website	www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/education-20.php
Email address	mathew.hargreaves@halliwellhomes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Rowan House is an independent school that provides education for vulnerable children.
- This is the school's first standard inspection. The school opened on 7 September 2020.
- Five different local authorities place pupils at the school.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and health difficulties. Pupils who attend the school usually have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector met with the director of education and had a conversation with the proprietor to discuss the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and personal, social, health and economic education.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding policy, along with a range of safeguarding information. This work included scrutiny of the school's single central record of checks made on adults. Inspectors checked staff's safeguarding training and spoke to staff about safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including policies, curriculum plans, health and safety records, school action plans and the school's self-evaluation.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises to check that these meet the requirements of the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Jonathan Leonard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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