

# Inspection of Rossendale School

Bamford Road, Ramsbottom, Bury, Lancashire BL0 0RT

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Inspection dates: 5 to 7 October 2021

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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| The quality of education                               | <b>Good</b>        |
| Behaviour and attitudes                                | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Personal development                                   | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Leadership and management                              | <b>Good</b>        |
| Sixth-form provision                                   | <b>Good</b>        |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection           | Outstanding        |
| Does the school meet the independent school standards? | <b>Yes</b>         |

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils thrive at this supportive and happy school. Caring staff welcome pupils each morning. Staff get to know pupils well. This means that pupils settle quickly when they join the school. Pupils form strong, trusting relationships with their peers and staff. Parents' and carers' views of the school are very positive.

Leaders are determined that all pupils, including students in the sixth form, will succeed in life. Staff work as a close-knit team at Rossendale. They ensure that pupils get the support that they need. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils understand these expectations. Over time, due to the specialist support in place, pupils' behaviour improves significantly. Pupils are more able to manage their emotions and communicate their needs to adults. Staff act quickly to tackle any signs of misbehaviour. They deal with bullying effectively.

Pupils have access to an exceptional range of activities that help them to become independent young citizens. They take part in many trips, such as visiting the theatre and skiing in Italy. Pupils develop their understanding of healthy relationships, responsibilities and the wider world. They are well prepared for life beyond school.

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

Pupils at Rossendale have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are skilled in identifying and meeting these needs. Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils. They seek a range of specialist support and guidance, including from specialists in speech therapy and clinical psychology.

Leaders have designed a well-organised, broad and balanced curriculum. This curriculum develops pupils' skills and knowledge, so that they make strong progress from their starting points. Leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Teachers deliver this in a way that supports pupils' social and communication needs effectively. For example, in physical education, pupils develop their knowledge of individual activities, including orienteering and climbing. They then progress to taking part in small-group sports such as football.

Curriculum plans ensure that pupils learn the important knowledge in a logical order. This means that pupils build on what they already know and can do. Leaders and the proprietor body ensure that teachers and staff are well trained to deliver the curriculum skilfully. Leaders ensure that pupils learn and play in safe, well-furnished areas. Pupils and students also use specialist equipment safely and confidently. This includes music and media rooms that are well suited to pupils' needs.

Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are met well. This allows pupils to access the ambitious curriculum. Pupils and students study an appropriate range of

qualifications. For example, students in the sixth form can now study a broader range of vocational and academic qualifications.

Leaders check pupils' progress through the planned curriculum. In a small number of subjects, leaders and teachers do not identify whether pupils have remembered the important knowledge that they need. As a result, teachers do not always know how well pupils are achieving in these subjects. This means that they do not have the detailed information needed to finely tune their plans so that pupils can build on what they already know.

Reading is a key priority in this school. Teachers read books that engage and excite pupils. In addition, having access to a well-stocked library has helped to foster a love of reading in pupils. Leaders have ensured that pupils read books that are well matched to their reading ability. This enables pupils to develop into confident, fluent readers. Leaders track pupils' reading progress often. However, teachers' checks do not always tell them how well pupils' comprehension skills are developing.

Pupils have many carefully planned opportunities to develop as well-rounded young adults. They learn about different relationships, faiths and cultures. Pupils are exposed to the wider world through many trips and activities. They benefit from a meticulously planned personal development curriculum that includes nationally recognised awards, including The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This exemplary offer for pupils' personal development improves their self-confidence and social skills.

Leaders provide students and pupils with clear advice that prepares them very well for life beyond school. The expertly designed personal development curriculum ensures that pupils develop a range of independent living skills. This curriculum includes the statutory requirements of relationships and sex education. Older pupils and students benefit from supported placements at local colleges and work experience. Leaders encourage students to have ambitious next steps. As a result, when they leave school, students remain in education, employment or training.

Staff are highly skilled in managing pupils' complex behaviours. They help pupils to develop a keen sense of right and wrong. Staff, including therapeutic staff, work together seamlessly to improve pupils' behaviour.

Leaders check pupils' attendance and punctuality often. When they need to, leaders put bespoke support in place to ensure that pupils' attendance improves. Despite many pupils having poor attendance at their previous settings, pupils now attend school regularly. Pupils enjoy school and share what they have learned with their parents. A typical comment from parents was, 'The difference in our child since attending Rossendale has been amazing'.

Staff feel that they can raise concerns with senior leaders. They say that leaders listen to them and value their well-being. Governors know the school well. They ensure that the independent school standards are met. Governors and senior leaders have made sure that the required policies, including the safeguarding policy, are available on the school's website.

The members of the proprietor body understand their duties. They have a well-developed knowledge of how to ensure pupils with complex SEND are kept safe. Governors and members of the proprietor body offer suitable challenge and support to school leaders. For example, they check how well the curriculum is working. There is an accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils and their families extremely well. Staff are well trained. They understand how pupils at Rossendale are particularly vulnerable. Staff use this knowledge to quickly spot any signs of concern. They know who to contact to keep pupils safe.

Pupils learn how to identify risks online and in the community. Older pupils learn how to travel around the local area safely. They learn about road safety, including how to use public transport. Pupils know the dangers of drugs, alcohol and inappropriate behaviour online. They know how to raise any concerns they have.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers assess the important knowledge identified in curriculum plans. This means that teachers do not always have the most useful information to adapt their curriculum plans. Leaders should review their assessment systems, including those in the sixth form, so that pupils and students can build more effectively on what they know and can do.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 119845   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>                    | 888/6020   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Lancashire   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10203779   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Other independent special school   |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Independent school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 7 to 18  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>         | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 92   |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 17   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>                 | None   |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                                 | Priory New Education Services Ltd  |
| <b>Chair</b>                                      | Christopher Strong   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | George Mills   |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>                   | £66,636 to £74,967   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                           | 01706 822779   |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk/find-a-location/rossendale-school-ramsbottom">www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk/find-a-location/rossendale-school-ramsbottom</a> |
| <b>Email address</b>                              | <a href="mailto:rossendale@priorygroup.com">rossendale@priorygroup.com</a>   |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 10 to 12 October 2017  |

## Information about this school

- The school operates from two sites. The main site, in Ramsbottom, caters for pupils in Years 8 to 11. The other site is based in Rawtenstall and caters for pupils in Years 3 to 7 and students in the sixth form.
- Since the previous inspection, a new leadership team has been created. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher, a new deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher.
- Due to the increased numbers of pupils at the school, and an increase in the number of pupils with complex needs, several new staff have been appointed.
- The school was not using any alternative provision at the time of this inspection.

## 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.

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology and personal, social and health education. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors also considered other subjects, including English, science, physical education and music. They met with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and evaluated curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included documentation and information relating to the independent school standards. Inspectors spoke to the headteacher and other senior leaders throughout the inspection. An inspector met with the SENCo. The lead inspector conducted a tour of both sites with the head of care.
- The lead inspector met with the school's operations director and managing director. Both are governors at the school. He spoke on the telephone to the chair of the proprietor body. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone to representatives of three local authorities who place pupils at the school. He also spoke on the telephone to a clinical psychologist employed by the school.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and maintaining the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and questioned staff on their understanding of these procedures. The

lead inspector reviewed records of pupils' attendance. Inspectors observed pupils during playtimes, lunchtimes and as they arrived at school. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with pupils.

- Inspectors considered 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 36 free-text comments. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone to four parents. Inspectors also considered 75 responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Quinn

Her Majesty's Inspector

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