

Inspection of The Rowans

Silverbank, Churchill Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME5 0LB

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' lives are turned around during their time at this school. When they arrive, pupils are often unhappy, feel rejected and lack confidence. By the time they leave, they are happy and enthusiastic, with clear plans for their future lives.

Staff work tirelessly to give pupils the emotional support they need. They help pupils to realise that this school is a place of safety. Pupils feel very safe at this school. The school offers a range of therapies that help pupils to improve their sense of well-being. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. The school deals with any rare incidents of bullying in a firm but fair way.

Leaders ensure that there is a rich curriculum that inspires pupils to achieve well. Staff have the highest expectations, and pupils step up to that challenge. Pupils achieve an impressive range of qualifications; these provide an excellent stepping stone to fulfil their future life aspirations.

There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Staff go out of their way to find activities that interest and enthuse every pupil. These activities give pupils opportunities to take responsibility, become more resilient and build a passion for life.

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

Leadership is inspirational. This school is recognised for its excellent practice both within the Medway area and further afield. The vision 'to inspire change for a brighter future' is evident in every aspect of school life. Leaders at this school make sure pupils are given the hope and help they need to succeed and lead fulfilling lives.

After starting at The Rowans, pupils realise that they have joined a school community that really cares about their well-being. Staff build trusting relationships. They are alert to any changes in pupils' mental and physical well-being. As one pupil put it, 'It's friendly here, and teachers listen to you. When I first came, it felt like I had joined a family.'

The quality of education is outstanding. Leaders have designed an impressive curriculum that meets pupils' academic and emotional needs. Subjects are carefully sequenced to ensure that pupils build on their knowledge in a step-by-step way. All staff share leaders' high ambitions. They reignite pupils' interest in learning and expect work of the highest quality. Most pupils achieve an impressive range of GCSEs and other qualifications.

Reading is given a high priority in the school. Those pupils who are not confident readers are given regular support to improve. More confident readers make good use of the impressive library.

Staff are experts in identifying each pupil's academic and emotional needs. They assess these regularly to ensure they are always being met. There are strong links with a range

of outside agencies who ensure that pupils, including those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, have the support they need.

Pupils benefit from an exceptional careers programme. It provides numerous opportunities for pupils to consider different options. Pupils' interests are carefully matched to work experience opportunities. Almost every pupil who has left The Rowans has gone onto further education, employment or training.

Beyond the academic, the school excels in providing a rich and varied range of opportunities. These develop pupils' understanding of the world and enhance their personal development. For example, activities such as bush craft help pupils to develop their confidence and sense of self-reliance. Pupils are encouraged to articulate their views, such as at the weekly gatherings about current affairs. Pupils discuss issues such as sexuality and gender. Pupils have a keen environmental awareness; they are currently undertaking a review of plastics used in the school.

The behaviour of pupils is excellent. They are respectful and courteous to both staff and their fellow pupils. Attitudes to learning are exceptional. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were so keen to complete answering a question that they kept working after the lesson had ended.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Excellent safeguarding practice is woven through every aspect of school life. Staff are alert to safeguarding risks and quickly identify any pupil in need of support. Pupils know who to speak to if they feel they may be at risk of harm. There are effective systems in place to record safeguarding concerns. The school has close links with the local authority and other specialist agencies. Records show that staff ensure that pupils get the help they need.

There are effective arrangements to ensure the safe recruitment of staff.

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 school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144134
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10213674
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Pamela Conibeer
Headteacher	Fiona May
Website	www.therowans.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Rowans converted to become an academy in June 2017. When its predecessor school, The Rowans, was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2015, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some have an EHC plan. Pupils have typically experienced difficulties in mainstream schools. All have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one alternative provision.
- There have been some delays in the construction of a new alternative provision school for key stages 1, 2 and 3 to be called The Beeches. Due to these delays, The Inspiring Change Multi-Academy Trust gained a temporary approval from the Department for Education for an increase in both the number on roll and age range of pupils at The Rowans. In September 2021, The Rowans opened a

temporary site for primary-age pupils. This is situated in a building on another school site seven miles away. Currently, there are three primary-age pupils on roll. Once The Beeches is constructed, primary-age pupils will move to that provision and The Rowans will revert back to the 11 to 16 age range and a maximum number on roll of 65.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer and other trustees, the headteacher, the SENCo and other senior staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and art. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- The lead inspector checked the school's recruitment process and spoke to pupils and staff to gauge their understanding of safeguarding and keeping safe.
- Inspectors looked at the six responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and 37 responses to the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Harry Ingham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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