

Inspection of a good school: Rigby Hall Day Special School

Rigby Lane, Aston Fields, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 2EP

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 February 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Expectations are high at Rigby Hall Day Special School. Leaders want the very best for the pupils who attend, and many pupils' needs are met well. Parents and carers think that the school is a very special place. One parent told inspectors, 'This school has made a wonderful difference to our child that we never thought was possible,' and others had similar views.

In most lessons, teachers work hard to ensure that pupils get the right support to overcome their barriers to learning. As a result, behaviour is positive, and most pupils engage well with learning. However, this is not always the case. Leaders are now systematically working to ensure that all pupils have their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) met well.

Visits to farms, sports centres, Christmas markets and local supermarkets enrich pupils' lives. The school's life skills village, forest school and interactive play zone mean that varied and exciting experiences are on offer. However, not all pupils have day-to-day lessons that help them learn more, remember more and do more.

Leaders take any reported incidents of bullying seriously. If any pupils believe that bullying happens, leaders investigate and act swiftly. Pupils told inspectors that they can talk to staff, who will help them.

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

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders and governors had developed an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. At that point, they knew what needed to happen to make things even better. During the pandemic, leaders

prioritised keeping children safe and ensuring that many attended school. However, this meant that many of the planned developments to the curriculum did not happen.

Children in early years get off to a strong start at Rigby Hall. Staff prioritise the identification of children's individual needs. They quickly put the appropriate strategies to meet these needs into action, such as introducing communication systems or sensory diets. As a result, children find their voice, and play and learn consistently well. Strong leadership in early years drives high-quality lessons by ensuring that all staff have and use the necessary knowledge and skills.

Older pupils' individual needs are also often met well. Teachers understand the needs of pupils and put plans in place to meet those needs. For example, teachers use play therapy or social stories to help overcome emotional and social barriers to learning. Lessons are calm and purposeful. However, this attention to detail is not consistent across the school. When SEND needs are not well planned for, pupils do not engage fully in learning or make the progress they could.

Making sure that pupils can communicate well with the world around them is a high priority at Rigby Hall. Speech and language therapists support staff in identifying what is needed for each pupil to give them 'their voice'. Recent comprehensive training on picture exchange systems has been rolled out to some staff. However, not all staff have received this valuable training. Consequently, some pupils do not always find a way to communicate their needs, wants or feelings.

High-quality learning in all subjects is rightly leaders' ambition for all pupils. There is a clear, long-term plan for what leaders want pupils to know and learn. However, it is not always clear how leaders intend pupils to learn the most important knowledge and skills. Leaders recently identified schemes of work in some subjects, such as communication and reading, which is helping staff know what they need to teach. However, in other subjects, the intended curriculum is not yet clear.

Recently, leaders have renewed their drive to develop reading. A new phonics scheme is currently being rolled out across the school. The subject leader provides staff with frequent training and support, which ensures that all teachers have the right expertise to teach phonics and reading well. Reward tokens to purchase books from book-vending machines excite and motivate pupils. However, in some classes, reading is not taught as well. In these cases, staff do not act on their training or consider the support that pupils need in order to learn.

Leaders want all pupils to have experiences that will enrich their lives and their understanding of the world. Before the pandemic, many school clubs provided opportunities for pupils to develop their own interests and hobbies. Leaders have recently restarted these clubs. Residential trips to places such as the Lake District or Staffordshire broaden life experiences. This desire to make sure that pupils experience exciting and diverse opportunities is a strength of the school.

Morale is high. Staff are proud to work at Rigby Hall and enjoy their work. They feel well supported by the leadership team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Regular training aims to ensure that all staff have the necessary skills to act when they feel that pupils are at risk. When concerns are raised, those responsible for safeguarding act quickly to investigate. As a result, pupils and families get the support they need.

Leaders are now refining their processes to monitor the quality of safeguarding during the school day and when pupils are using transport provided by the local authority. They are also considering new ways to listen to the voices of pupils and students so that young people can always tell staff when they feel worried or at risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is too much variability in how well special educational needs and/or disabilities are accurately identified, assessed and met. This limits how successfully pupils engage with learning. Leaders need to monitor and act swiftly when the appropriate provision is not in place to ensure that these pupils' needs are met.
- Some school curriculum subjects are still at the earliest stages of development. Leaders have established a clear, long-term intent for subjects. However, it is not always clear how these intents will be fulfilled for all subjects. There is not yet a complete sequence of lessons in subjects such as science that accurately builds on prior knowledge. Curriculum leaders, supported by senior leaders, now need to establish what knowledge pupils will learn at different school stages and how this will be achieved.
- The pandemic has had a significant impact on how well leaders have been able to monitor the quality of provision at the school. Current school self-evaluation does not accurately reflect the school's relative strengths and weaknesses, including around curriculum implementation. Leaders need to re-establish their prior pandemic systems for monitoring and evaluation, including listening to and acting on what pupils tell them.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2012.

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	117049
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10212443
Type of school	Special school
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Huw Powell
Headteacher	Tracey Smith
Website	www.rigbyhallschool.com
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant developments on the school site. A life skills village has been developed, providing opportunities for vocational work-related learning and health and fitness. A new multi-use sports area, as well as a new interactive play area, forest school area, outdoor and indoor gyms and a daily mile track have also been created.
- Since the previous inspection, pupil numbers have increased significantly from 135 to 198.
- Two new assistant headteachers responsible for primary and secondary departments were appointed in September 2019 to enhance the current leadership team and meet the needs of the increased number of pupils on site.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, inspectors focused on the following subjects: reading, communication, science, and personal, social and health education. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined teachers' plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- Inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and governors about safeguarding arrangements. They examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records. They also found out about safety procedures and routines.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- During the inspection, inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, governors, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with parents and carers, escorts, drivers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. One inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephanie Moran

Her Majesty's Inspector

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