

Inspection of The Rowan School

Tunnel Street, Coseley, Dudley, West Midlands WV14 9DE

Inspection dates: 1–3 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff help pupils learn a lot at this school. Pupils enjoy studying a range of topics from the Titanic to dinosaurs. They love to talk and write about what they know and remember. All staff are committed to pupils achieving their best and help them realise their potential.

Staff have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff are patient and listen to pupils when they get anxious or upset. They encourage pupils to reflect on their actions and talk about their feelings. Staff work with individual pupils to ensure everyone is respected.

Pupils make friends here. They say that their friends are kind, show respect and are 'just nice'. Pupils feel safe at school. They say and believe that staff care about them. Staff watch carefully for any signs of bullying. They intervene quickly and help pupils get on well together.

Leaders ensure that all pupils have the chance to participate in activities off site. Pupils enjoy going swimming or visiting the local library. Parents and carers are very positive about the school. Comments such as 'we now have hope for our son' and 'the school has put a smile back on my child's face' are typical of those made by parents who spoke to inspectors.

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

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Almost all pupils have previously experienced difficulty with, and disruption to, their education. The proprietors are deeply committed to providing a safe place where pupils are well cared for and have the chance to learn. They ensure that the school premises are maintained to a high standard and suitable for teaching and learning. They have put in place policies and procedures that focus on pupils' well-being and learning. They ensure that teachers have the resources they need to teach effectively. All the independent school standards are consistently met. Every decision they take is in the best interests of the pupils.

Leaders have further developed and improved the curriculum since the last inspection. They work closely with teachers to help pupils enjoy their learning. Leaders carefully identify the broad range of knowledge they want pupils to learn in a wide range of subjects. Teachers support pupils to use what they already know and build on it in each lesson. A rich, engaging curriculum is now embedded and accessed by all pupils. Most pupils make strong progress through the curriculum.

Teachers identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by missed education and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. They adapt and revise the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs. For most pupils, this is done well. There are times, however, when the curriculum is not demanding enough to meet the needs of the most able pupils. This slows the progress they make.

Leaders give speaking and listening a high priority across the school. Teachers skilfully quiz pupils to develop their ideas and extend their vocabulary. Pupils develop confidence to talk about their learning, share their thoughts and ask questions. Adults help pupils learn the words they need to express themselves clearly.

Books can be found everywhere in the school. Teachers encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. They read regularly to pupils and take pupils to visit the local library. Teachers build in reading opportunities across different subjects. Pupils talk about favourite authors such as Roald Dahl and David Walliams. They share facts enthusiastically from non-fiction books linked to their topics.

Pupils generally read with a good level of comprehension. Some older pupils who join the school often have significant gaps in their phonics knowledge. A new phonics scheme has recently been introduced in order to better support pupils. All staff have been trained in how to use it. One-to-one support helps some pupils secure the sounds they need to be more independent in their reading. However, this new phonics curriculum is not yet supporting the few pupils who struggle to segment and blend as well as it needs to.

Leaders have planned an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. It is taught regularly and threaded through day-to-day activities. Pupils learn about what can affect their mental and physical health. Adults skilfully help them understand what anxiety is and how to manage it. Pupils learn about what makes a good friend. Leaders ensure that relationships and sex education and health education are taught effectively.

Leaders and staff know individual pupils extremely well. They work together to help pupils manage their behaviour more effectively. All staff work together to de-escalate situations if they arise. They use a range of techniques to calm pupils and address the issues. Regular training sessions enable staff to reflect on the best approaches to use with pupils. Leaders plan to further develop staff expertise in supporting pupils' emotional development. There is evidence of a positive improvement in individual pupils' behaviour over time.

A suitable accessibility plan is in place and leaders fulfil their obligations under schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010.

Leaders provide pupils with a broad range of meaningful experiences to deepen their understanding of the world. Pupils participate eagerly in the recently introduced swimming lessons. As a result of 'make your dreams come true week' pupils have aspirations to become a car mechanic, an archaeologist and a police officer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults prioritise keeping pupils safe from harm. They are vigilant from the moment pupils arrive in the morning until they leave. Leaders act swiftly and provide timely support for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Staff teach pupils how to manage risks they might face in their everyday lives. For example, pupils learn how to stay safe when playing computer games.

The school's safeguarding policy reflects current government guidance and is provided to anyone who requests a copy. The proprietor ensures that the required pre-employment checks are made before new staff start work at the school.

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

- Teachers' support for pupils with gaps in their phonics is not precise enough. This means that some pupils struggle to decode new words or spell accurately. Leaders should continue to refine the teaching of phonics, to support more effectively those pupils who have phonological gaps so that they can read and write with increasing independence.
- The curriculum is not as ambitious as it needs to be for some of the most able pupils at the school. These pupils do not achieve as well as they might. Leaders should support teachers to plan and set work that matches the varying needs of all pupils and challenges them to reach the high standards of which they are capable
- Leaders have focused on developing the quality of education rather than how to enable staff to support pupils with the most severe social, emotional and behavioural needs. This means that on occasions staff do not have the knowledge they need to deal with serious incidents when they arise. Leaders should continue to develop staff's understanding of, and expertise in, knowing how best to support pupils with the most challenging behaviour and significant needs.

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

Unique reference number	144374
DfE registration number	332/6008
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10202320
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Mike Searle and Ben Whittall
Headteacher	Snita Verma
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,150 to £57,650
Telephone number	01902 679877
Email address	sverma@therowanschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–12 December 2019

Information about this school

- The Rowan School is an independent day school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school offers places for up to 36 pupils. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Since the last full inspection, the school has appointed several new teaching and support staff.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in December 2019.
- The school does not make use of 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.

The school meets the independent school 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, teachers and support staff. The lead inspector spoke with the proprietors.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics, history and PSHE. For each deep dive, these included discussions about the curriculum with leaders, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. The inspector also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects and talked about the books they were reading.
- Inspectors also talked to pupils more generally about their experiences in school. They observed pupils at breaktimes and saw them at work in a range of lessons.
- Inspectors talked with staff to discuss how they are supported to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including school policies, curriculum documents and the school website.
- In checking safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised documentation, looked at the school's processes for reporting concerns and the employment checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment.
- Checks were made relating to the independent school standards, including checks on the school's premises.
- The lead inspector considered responses, including free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of

the first day of the inspection. The lead inspector met with three parents and carers. She considered the contents of a letter from a parent.

- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Ashley

Ofsted Inspector

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