

Inspection of Rodenhurst School

Rodenhurst Hall, Rodenhurst Lane, Rodington, Shropshire SY4 4QU

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are welcomed each day by staff who genuinely care about them.

Leaders say learning is child led. Pupils choose topics that interest them. While this engages some, it does not suit all. Leaders have not considered the content that pupils need to learn and when they need to learn it. Learning, therefore, is disconnected and does not help pupils to learn and remember more. Pupils are not well prepared for their next steps.

All pupils have personal behaviour plans. However, leaders do not ensure that these are followed. As a result, some pupils display challenging, unsafe behaviour. Leaders have not ensured that staff have the expertise or training they need to support pupils well.

Many pupils attending the school have gaps in their previous learning. Pupils do not attend regularly enough to ensure these gaps are met. Leaders do not ensure that checks on the well-being and learning of these pupils are made regularly enough.

Pupils enjoy reading. Precise phonics teaching helps them to tackle new words. Pupils become confident readers over time.

Pupils experience opportunities outside of the classroom. They enjoy visits to local attractions and benefit from learning within the school's spacious grounds.

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

Pupils can join the school at any point during the academic year. Prior to attending, they have often experienced a number of different educational placements. Leaders have adopted an aspirational curriculum which matches the expectations of the National Curriculum. These plans are supplemented with commercial schemes and set out clear expectations and sequenced learning opportunities. These plans do not reflect what is being taught.

Teachers consider the interests of the pupils and respond with a 'pupil-led' approach. While this is powerful in engaging some pupils, it does not work for all, as interest is not sustained. This overburdens teachers and creates unnecessary work.

Teachers have not considered the pertinent knowledge that pupils need to be well prepared for their next phase in education. Consequently, in some subjects learning is disconnected and jumbled. It does not build on what pupils know already or connect to their new learning. Leaders have not made regular enough checks on learning to be able to improve this.

All pupils have complex and special educational needs and/or disabilities. Intervention work for these pupils, particularly around spelling is well considered.

Pupils benefit from skilled one-to-one teaching that develops areas outlined in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The school's approach to reading is carefully planned. Pupils are assessed on arrival and a personalised plan is put in place. Precise one-to-one teaching helps these pupils to improve. A number of pupils read with confidence and fluency. Where pupils struggle to read, they are supported by skilled practitioners who teach phonics effectively. They use effective strategies to help pupils to learn unfamiliar words.

The school admits pupils who have a range of complex needs. Many of these pupils display challenging behaviours. Detailed behaviour support plans are in place, outlining potential triggers for behaviours and how staff should respond. These plans contain useful information that is crucial to supporting pupils' needs. They are not, however, routinely followed by all staff. Planned strategies are not used consistently. Leaders have not ensured that all staff have the skills they need to support these challenges. This means that incidents escalate and behaviour becomes unsafe. The school's records show frequent physical assaults on staff over time. Staff express varying views about how well pupils behave and how well leaders support them to manage behaviour.

Pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders aim for all pupils to attend school and create transition plans. However, these plans do not work for all. Welfare checks on pupils not attending school do not take place regularly enough. Some of these pupils are due to leave at the end of the academic year. They have been poorly prepared for their next stage in learning.

A few pupils know what they would like to do when they leave school. While some have been prepared well and have secured places at alternative provision, this is not the case for all. Careers advice and guidance is provided through the organisation. This, however, is in its infancy.

The small numbers in the school mean that staff know their pupils well. Planning for personal, health, social and economic (PSHE) education takes into account the individual needs of pupils. Leaders have plans in place that reflect the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education. Pupils learn about healthy relationships at a time that is appropriate for them. They know about online safety risks and understand what to do if they feel unsafe online. Pupils access opportunities outside of the curriculum. They speak enthusiastically about visits to local attractions and enjoy learning within the school grounds.

The proprietor and the school's management committee are not clear on their statutory responsibilities. They acknowledge that they have not checked on the school's performance regularly enough. This means that they do not have an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness.

While the management committee meets regularly, members have not considered the quality of education and the effectiveness of the curriculum. This means that

pupils do not do as well as they could. The school's development plans do not focus enough on the improvements to the curriculum that are most needed. This means that leaders' actions are not improving learning quickly enough.

A number of independent school standards are unmet. These standards relate directly to pupils' welfare, health and safety and their learning experiences. Leaders' checks on the safety of the site are not rigorous enough. For example, leaders could not provide evidence that the water supply is monitored in order to ensure safe usage and temperature. While those responsible for governance say there are policies in place to meet the schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, a copy of the school's accessibility plan was not provided during the inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and refers to the latest guidance from the Secretary of State.

Essential documentation outlining how to keep pupils safe is not followed consistently by all staff. During the inspection, pupils were placed in situations that were identified as known triggers for unsafe behaviours. The frequency of challenging behaviours has a negative impact on the well-being of pupils and staff over time.

Pupils who are absent are not checked on regularly enough. Alternative providers used by the school have not been provided with sufficient information about the pupils they are supporting.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils display challenging behaviour, which is not managed consistently well. This has a negative impact on the safety and well-being of staff and pupils. While there are detailed documents in place outlining triggers and appropriate responses, these are not followed consistently. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are provided with the expertise and support to manage behaviour incidents.
- Pupils' experiences in classes do not consistently build on what they already know and can already do. This is because curriculum plans are not fit for purpose. They do not take account of the pertinent knowledge and skills that pupils need. Leaders need to review curriculum content to make sure the right knowledge is taught. They need to ensure that learning is sequentially planned to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills build over time.
- Checks on the curriculum and the school's compliance with the independent school standards have not been completed regularly enough by those responsible for governance. This means that the school's action plan does not focus on the

most appropriate areas for improvement. Leaders should ensure that the school's action plan targets where improvement is needed to ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently and securely.

- A number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school's checks on pupils' well-being and learning lack rigour. Leaders need to establish robust plans around these pupils. They need to ensure pupils are supported effectively while they are pupils at the school and prepared well for their next steps.

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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	148556
DfE registration number	894/6013
Local authority	Telford & Wrekin
Inspection number	10220458
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Family Care
Chair	Andrew O'Reilly
Headteacher	Sarah Earing
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,515
Telephone number	01772 647500
Website	www.family-care.co.uk
Email address	sarah.earing@family-care.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Rodenhurst School is part of the Family Care Group. The school is set in rural Shropshire and offers up to 15 places for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties and special educational needs and/or disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder and associated conditions. Places are also offered to pupils who have experienced childhood trauma. Pupils are placed at the school by local authorities, including Telford and Wrekin.
- The school is set within spacious grounds and contains five learning areas, a large hall and kitchen. Pupils access outdoor space and can also attend local leisure facilities for physical education.
- The school opened in July 2021. This is the first standard inspection.
- The school makes use of Crossbar, an alternative provision with various sites across the Midlands. This provision is not inspected by Ofsted.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the school's first standard inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The members of the inspection team discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and took this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection followed the deep dive methodology, involving meetings with subject leaders, visits to lessons, reviewing work in books and talking with pupils about their educational experiences. Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and PSHE education. Inspectors also considered the wider curriculum by reviewing plans and work in books.
- The lead inspector met with those responsible for safeguarding and considered the school's systems for reporting and recording. The school's single central record of checks made on staff prior to them starting at the school was also checked.
- Documentation relating to health and safety was checked and a number of policies, including admissions, anti-bullying, behaviour, complaints and the curriculum. The lead inspector toured the premises to check compliance against the independent school standards.
- Leaders took the decision to withdraw from the inspection during the final on-site day of the inspection. Inspection activities were not able to continue. On the third on-site day, the head of education obstructed the inspection and was unwilling to

co-operate, requesting that inspectors leave the school site. This meant that inspectors were unable to give leaders final feedback in accordance with Ofsted's published policy. Judgments were made based on the evidence inspectors were able to secure.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Stephanie Moran Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught; and
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–

- 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils.
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- A copy of the school's accessibility plan was requested but not provided.

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