

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Rodney House School

2 Albert Grove, Longsight, Greater Manchester M12 4WF

---

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2023

## **Outcome**

Rodney House School continues to be an outstanding school.

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

Pupils at Rodney House thrive. All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders, governors and staff are highly ambitious for each pupil. Pupils develop close, supportive relationships with staff. They are happy and safe in their animal-themed classes.

Over time, pupils increasingly meet leaders' high expectations. Dedicated and caring staff work effectively to meet pupils' SEND. Staff use excellent strategies to resolve any issues of behaviour, including bullying. For example, some classes create class charters that explain clear rules to pupils. Other pupils receive 'kindness coins' from staff when they show positive behaviours.

Pupils receive high-quality support from skilled staff, sports coaches and a friendly robot. This develops pupils' academic, physical and social communication skills. Pupils achieve highly.

Pupils and their families benefit from excellent pastoral support. Parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the care and education that leaders provide at 'caring cuppa' coffee mornings.

Pupils enjoy clubs such as gardening and music. They showcase their talents at the 'Rodney House Festival'. Some pupils work in the school office. Pupils visited an art gallery to see their work on display. These experiences help pupils to be visible and valued in the community.

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

Leaders have designed a detailed and highly ambitious curriculum. This clearly identifies the small steps of knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember in a broad range of subjects. Leaders and staff work closely with parents to create a bespoke

curriculum pathway for each pupil. These curriculums break down the outcomes in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans into precise and aspirational targets.

Leaders establish precisely pupils' starting points. Teachers successfully identify pupils' forgotten knowledge and revisit this often until it is secure. Leaders and staff use assessment information from specialists, such as on-site therapists, effectively. This supports staff so that they identify pupils' new and evolving SEND accurately.

Teachers design engaging activities that help pupils to learn the curriculum. Leaders and staff have strong subject knowledge. Teachers adapt their teaching skilfully to meet pupils' SEND. Consequently, pupils achieve highly from their various starting points.

Well-trained staff use every possible opportunity to develop pupils' communication. They introduce pupils to engaging stories, songs and rhymes in an exciting way. This promotes pupils' vocabulary and interaction. Leaders have established an effective reading and phonics curriculum. Teachers deliver this expertly well. Pupils use carefully designed communication aids and props to remember stories and phonic sounds. Over time, pupils improve their ability to read and/or communicate with confidence.

Leaders and staff have established very clear structures that help to improve pupils' behaviour. For instance, staff use consistent symbols and visual timetables successfully so that pupils know what to expect. This reduces pupils' anxieties. At times, some pupils can become unsettled. Skilled staff respond quickly and use effective strategies to support these pupils. Close supervision ensures that disruption to learning is minimal.

Pupils benefit from an impressive array of wider opportunities. For instance, during the inspection, parents cheered for their children at sports day. Leaders ensured that all pupils could access competitive races. This helps to build pupils' resilience and confidence. The school council helps to give all pupils a voice and teaches pupils about democracy. For example, school councillors voted for new climbing equipment and helped to recruit staff. Pupils regularly visit places in the local community, including museums and football clubs. These opportunities, in addition to the highly effective curriculum, prepare pupils very well for the next stage of their education.

Governors offer support and challenge to leaders in equal measure. For example, governors check the impact of leaders' support for disadvantaged pupils. Governors regularly check on senior leaders' well-being. Leaders and governors show an unwavering resolve to continuously improve the school.

Leaders consider staff workload carefully. They have improved the way that staff capture assessment information so that it is more efficient and helpful. Senior leaders are approachable and supportive. Staff are highly appreciative of the professional development that they receive, for example national professional qualifications, coaching and networking opportunities. Staff enjoy being part of the close-knit team at Rodney House.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, including governors, have safeguarding as their top priority. Staff complete a range of useful training on topics such as the Prevent duty and online safety. This helps staff to identify signs of possible abuse or neglect.

Staff know pupils well. When required, they refer concerns promptly so that vulnerable pupils receive the support that they need to be safe.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. They learn about stranger danger, how to stay cool in warm weather and how to cross the road safely. Pupils learn about consent in an appropriate way. Staff encourage pupils to communicate and respect the word 'no', using speech, gesture or symbols.

## Background

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

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in October 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105616
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10226135
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	72
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Rukhsana Ahmed
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Morley
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rodneyhouse.manchester.sch.uk">www.rodneyhouse.manchester.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a generic special school that provides education for pupils, aged four to 11, with autism spectrum disorder, profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Places are commissioned by local authorities.
- Several staff are new to the school since the previous inspection. Changes include the appointment of a new headteacher and chair of governors.
- The school provides SEND outreach services across Greater Manchester. This was not considered as part of the inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 completed deep dives in early reading and communication; personal, social, health and economic education; and physical development and physical education.

They met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to staff and pupils. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- The lead inspector also considered the mathematics, art and design, and history curriculums. He met with subject leaders and reviewed pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. They spoke to the headteacher and other senior leaders throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of Manchester local authority by telephone.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and checked the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. They observed pupils during lessons, at playtimes and at lunchtimes.
- The lead inspector met with a group of staff to discuss their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Ruddy

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:  
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023