

Inspection of an outstanding school: Rosewood Free School

Aldermoor Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 5NA

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 2023

Outcome

Rosewood Free School continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Zoé Evans. This school is part of Specialist Schools Trust Ltd, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Zoé Evans, who is also the headteacher of this school, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Boyle.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Rosewood Free School thrive. Staff cater exceptionally well for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. When pupils first join the school, they and their families become part of the 'Rosewood family'. One parent, echoing the views of many, said, 'It's like a second home.' Another said, 'We feel fortunate to be part of the Rosewood community. The staff are all superstars!' A committed team of teachers, support staff, doctors, nurses and therapists works collaboratively to ensure that pupils receive high-quality education, health and care. Staff promote pupils' attendance. As a result, pupils are extremely well looked after and make exceptional progress with their learning and personal development.

Expert staff know pupils remarkably well. Staff show absolute respect for pupils. Highly consistent routines support pupils' understanding of what is happening around them. Staff observe pupils carefully for physical movements, expressions, responses and vocalisations. They interpret what they see and hear and respond expertly to ensure they meet pupils' needs in a timely way. Pupils experience a wide range of rich and stimulating learning activities. Preparing pupils for adulthood starts from day one. Encouraging pupils' independence and ability to make choices is deeply embedded in the school.

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

There is a palpable ambition that sits right at the heart of Rosewood Free School. This is a school where 'individuality leads learning'. Pupils benefit from a highly personalised and

tailored curriculum, which successfully meets their individual needs. Learning is well organised and is carefully integrated into every aspect of the school day.

Staff set ambitious, achievable targets for pupils across five key areas of communication, cognition, physical development, environmental control and personal, social, emotional and well-being. Staff gather a wealth of information about pupils. This information helps them to respond promptly to what pupils need. It also helps them to track progress towards pupils' targets, which are set out in their education, health and care plans (EHC plans).

The work of the multi-disciplinary team is exceptional. A truly professional and collaborative approach ensures that pupils' holistic needs are well understood and met. Communication between professionals is high quality. Strong working relationships ensure that pupils receive the care they need promptly while maintaining a focus on learning. Pupils receive a range of therapies, including hydrotherapy and physiotherapy. The school's work with parents and carers is particularly positive. Parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View and those who spoke to inspectors during the inspection gave glowing accounts of the school's highly effective partnerships. Inspectors saw examples of this too.

Pupils' wider personal development is a strength. Extensive opportunities, including trips, support pupils extremely well. During the inspection, one class visited the nearby church for a coffee morning. They met members of the public, enjoyed cake and, importantly, made progress towards their individual targets. Some pupils have additional responsibilities. For example, the lead inspector observed a pupil, under the careful supervision of a member of staff, using a switch to shred paper when prompted by a staff member. Other pupils take orders for sandwiches using visual symbols. They purchase ingredients at the local shop.

Staff prepare pupils exceptionally well for adulthood. Pupils' and families' individual wishes are carefully considered and are reflected in personalised pathways. Staff support families extremely well, particularly at transition points. These are well thought through. Staff do all they can to ensure that the excellent support they have provided for pupils continues long after pupils leave school.

Leaders have successfully fostered a culture of working together in the best interests of pupils. A strong team of staff supports each other well. Several initiatives help staff workload and well-being. For example, trained mental health first aiders are on hand to listen to staff at any time. Staff are positive about working here and about the support they receive. There are ample opportunities for staff to undertake additional training and independent research. Staff share their expertise with other schools.

Trustees and local governors know the school extremely well. They understand what is working well and the priorities for further development. Trustees and local governors have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They carry out their work diligently and hold leaders to account, providing a sensible balance of support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 July 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139265
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10288033
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tony Boyle
CEO of the trust	Zoé Evans
Headteacher	Zoé Evans
Website	www.rosewoodfreeschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 May 2018

Information about this school

- Rosewood Free School is part of Specialist Schools Trust Ltd. It is one of two special schools in the multi-academy trust.
- The school is a special school for pupils aged two to 19. Most pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. A smaller number of pupils have severe and complex learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The headteacher of the school is also the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education

provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, curriculum leaders, teachers, support staff and various staff within the multi-disciplinary team, such as doctors, nurses and therapists. The lead inspector also met with the chair of trustees and the chair of the local governing body, as well as two other local governors. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation about the school's work, including the curriculum. Additionally, they reviewed information relating to individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these areas of the curriculum: communication, physical development and preparation for adulthood. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, observed pupils and spoke to teachers.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders and staff and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and free-text comments from parents. They also considered responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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