

Inspection of an outstanding school: Rowan Tree Primary School

Green Hall Close, Atherton, Manchester, Lancashire M46 9HP

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 March 2024

Outcome

Rowan Tree Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy at this ambitious school. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement and conduct. Pupils receive high-quality care and support from skilled staff. Staff know pupils extremely well. The school uses this knowledge to provide pupils with a highly personalised curriculum. As a result, pupils thrive.

Pupils' social, emotional and academic abilities develop considerably over time. They achieve highly. The school focuses on improving pupils' personal, physical and communication skills through a broad curriculum and engaging learning environment.

Pupils experience a calm and supportive school. They receive a warm welcome from staff and Rowan, the school dog, each morning. The school successfully supports pupils to improve their behaviour over time. Well-established routines help pupils to focus on their learning.

Pupils benefit from many visits and experiences. For example, they walk to places in the local community and they attend residential visits further afield. Pupils enjoy attending clubs such as the sing and sign choir, yoga and messy play. They share books and learning experiences with friends from local schools. Pupils learn to care for farm animals, insects and the school rabbits, Flopsy and Mopsy. These opportunities contribute to developing pupils as active young citizens.

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

The school's vision statement, 'learning every moment', is embedded in all aspects of school life. The school has developed the curriculum substantially since the previous inspection. The curriculum, that staff further personalise for each pupil, meets pupils' SEND and education, health and care (EHC) plan targets extremely well.

The curriculum is aspirational, exciting and broad. The school has identified in detail the knowledge that pupils will learn and the order that this will be taught. Consequently, teachers understand what pupils need to focus on. Pupils build their learning in a logical way. Teachers have strong subject expertise. As a result, the delivery of the curriculum is highly effective.

The school routinely gathers assessment information about pupils. Teachers check pupils' progress through the curriculum carefully. Pupils receive regular, high-quality opportunities to revisit missed or forgotten knowledge. The school uses assessment information to identify and assess pupils' changing SEND skilfully. As a result, the school updates its approach to meeting pupils' SEND accordingly.

The school has a sharp focus on using every opportunity to develop pupils' communication and interaction skills. Staff use a range of first-class strategies, personalised to meet pupils' needs. Staff foster pupils' communication skills whenever possible. Pupils across the school benefit from listening to stories, rhymes and songs. Staff model vocabulary expertly. Most pupils become increasingly confident communicators.

The school has embedded a successful phonics programme. Pupils' phonics knowledge is checked carefully and often. They read regularly. Staff deliver the phonics programme so that it meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. Most pupils become increasingly fluent and accurate readers over time.

The school has established an impressive personal development offer. Pupils develop their life skills through well-thought-out activities. Their physical and mental health is promoted very well across the school. For example, pupils learn to respect different faiths and beliefs, stay safe in the community and how to make their own healthy snacks.

The school ensures that pupils benefit from excellent support to improve their behaviour. As a result, disruption to learning is minimized. Most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, attend school often. The school goes above and beyond to help improve a very small number of pupils to attend more regularly. For example, the school helps parents and carers when home-to-school transport is cancelled or delayed.

Parents are incredibly positive about the school. They appreciate the support that they receive from helpful staff. Furthermore, parents welcome the advice provided to them, such as at regular, welcoming coffee mornings.

The school is not complacent. Leaders and governors are focused on continuing to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. Changes that may impact on staff workload or well-being are considered carefully. Staff reported that they are proud to work as part of an exceptional team.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in September 2017.

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	131295
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10242029
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Luisa Preston
Headteacher	Louise Curran
Website	www.rowantree.wigan.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been several changes to staffing since the previous inspection. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school provides education for pupils with SEND. Pupils' main needs are severe learning difficulties, autism and associated physical, social and emotional, academic and communication and interaction needs. Places are commissioned by local authorities.
- The school does not make use of 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 that 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 conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders and teachers, visited some lessons, considered pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector also reviewed the science, physical education and music curriculums. He spoke with leaders and evaluated some pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of Wigan local authority.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at social times and in lessons. They spoke with pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, and their behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the records of governing body meetings and reports from the external evaluation of the school.

Inspection team

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andy Cunningham

His Majesty's Inspector

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