

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Rumworth School

Armadale Road, Ladybridge, Bolton BL3 4TP

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 March 2024

## **Outcome**

Rumworth School continues to be an outstanding school.

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

Pupils have a strong sense of belonging at this warm and inclusive school. They benefit from a culture that celebrates difference. Pupils enjoy exceptionally strong, caring relationships with adults, who know them very well. This helps pupils to feel happy. They know that there is always an adult available to help them if they are worried.

Staff are passionate about providing the very best education for pupils. From key stage 3 to the sixth form, there is no ceiling to the school's high ambitions for what pupils can achieve. Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve highly. They are superbly well prepared for their next steps in education.

Pupils are respectful of others, and they behave extremely well around school. Older pupils are excellent role models for their peers. They relish the many responsibilities that they have. For example, at lunchtimes, they serve meals and support younger pupils.

Pupils enjoy an impressive range of opportunities to develop pupils' personal, social and life skills. Pupils delight in the opportunities that they have to develop their resilience and confidence in the woodland area. They work with tenacity and pride when designing show gardens as part of 'The Rumworth School Grand Show'.

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

The school has designed an exceptionally effective and ambitious curriculum. Curriculum thinking is highly developed and reflects a strong resolve that every pupil will achieve all that they possibly can and be well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Teachers are confident in the subjects that they teach. They pride themselves in finding inventive and interesting ways to explain new ideas clearly. This helps pupils to remember important learning. Teachers skilfully use the information that they have about each pupil to break learning down into small, manageable steps. They have a thorough understanding of how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for individual pupils.

Learning goals in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are interwoven into all aspects of the curriculum. As a result, pupils are confident learners and thrive.

Developing pupils' communication and language skills is at the heart of the school's work. The school has given a great deal of thought to how to meet the wide range of pupils' communication, language and social interaction needs. This ranges from finding ways for non-verbal pupils to make their needs and choices known, to preparing pupils for work and independent living. For example, staff help pupils to express their likes and dislikes and teach them how to order food in a restaurant.

Reading has a particularly high profile in school. There is an excellent understanding of where all pupils are in their reading development. Adults provide effective support for pupils who find reading more difficult. For example, pupils who are ready to learn phonics develop their early reading skills well. Staff foster a love of reading among pupils and provide them with a wealth of books. They carefully select literature that reflects pupils' lives and experiences, while also taking account of pupils' own suggestions. For instance, pupils asked for some fiction that included neurodiverse characters.

Staff skilfully help pupils to regulate their own behaviour and to manage their emotions. They are quick to notice when pupils experience distress or discomfort and they respond sensitively. The school has strong relationships with families. While being mindful of the difficulties and barriers that families face, the school ensures that pupils attend regularly.

The school offers pupils many high-quality opportunities to develop themselves personally. For example, pupils of all ages love their rehearsals for the school show. Parents and carers said that they are so proud to see their children performing and that 'there is rarely a dry eye in the house' by the end of a show.

Comprehensive careers education, information, advice and guidance are available to pupils. Sixth-form students develop their aspirations in a range of professions. In horticulture and catering, this is to a professional standard. A wide range of quality work experience, work placement opportunities and other practical experiences reinforces the school's belief that there are no limits to what pupils can achieve.

Governors share the school's ambition for pupils. Staff value the support that they receive for their workload and well-being. For example, they appreciate the time that they are given to talk about their views. Staff are proud to work at the school. They are determined to make a real difference to the lives of pupils and their families.

## **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 April 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105277
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294218
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	335
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	119
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Samantha Fox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jennifer Dunne
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.rumworth.co.uk">https://www.rumworth.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post at the school in September 2023.
- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan. The school caters for a range of needs, including moderate learning difficulties, autism, speech, language and communication needs and severe learning difficulties.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

## 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, including aspects of early reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Where appropriate, inspectors spoke with some pupils about their learning. They also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Where appropriate, inspectors spoke with pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders. They also met with those responsible for SEND provision, pastoral care, careers advice and guidance and the sixth form.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, which focused on the well-being and safeguarding of pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including documents relating to school improvement.
- 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 Ofsted's pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sheldon Logue

Ofsted Inspector

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