

The Rowans School

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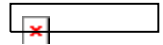
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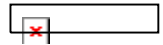
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Introduction and summary

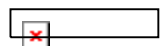


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



The Rowans is a non-selective, independent, co-educational preparatory school with charitable status. It was founded in 1936 and is situated in a large private house in a quiet residential part of Wimbledon.

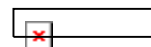
The school serves the local multi-cultural community. A minority of pupils speak English as an additional language, but all pupils are fluent in English. There are currently 120 pupils aged between two and half and eight years. There are significantly fewer girls in the older classes and currently no girls in Form 3.

The school prospectus sets out its aims as follows:

'To provide a dynamic and stimulating education based on traditional principles in a well structured, happy and secure environment. The children are given a thorough grounding in basic skills and through encouragement and a balanced and a varied curriculum, they develop healthy attitudes and enthusiasm for learning.'

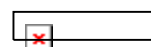
It is the intention of the school that pupils should continue their education in appropriate local independent schools.

Summary of main findings



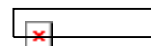
This is a successful school, which meets nearly all the regulations and is very well placed to meet the two it does not. It has a warm and friendly atmosphere in which pupils feel happy and valued. The curriculum provides pupils with a well-rounded education and this, together with good teaching, prepares pupils effectively for the next phase of their education. Pupils achieve well in tests and entrance exams.

What the school does well



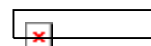
- the quality of teaching in the early years is a strength of the school;
- there are very good relationships amongst staff and pupils at the school;
- the behaviour of pupils, both in lessons and around the school, is very good;
- the attainment of pupils is high and well above the national average in English and mathematics;
- the school makes very good provision for the welfare health and safety of pupils;
- the facilities for pupils' outdoor play are very good; and
- the premises are maintained to a very high standard.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- ensure the designated child protection officer undertakes training as indicated in section 3; and
- ensure that, prior to confirmation of the appointment of all staff, appropriate checks are carried out to confirm their qualifications and medical fitness as outlined in section 4.

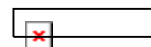
Next steps



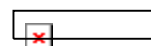
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- refine planning so that it takes account of the different ways in which pupils learn and match work even more closely to their individual needs;
- improve the consistency of the quality of marking and the written comments in pupils' books to help them improve; and
- increase the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and provide teachers with relevant training.

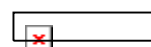
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The curriculum is broad and includes subjects of the National Curriculum as well as spoken French. The school employs specialists for the teaching of French, music and games. The headteacher plays an important part in curriculum development and in ensuring consistency in curriculum coverage and breadth. Swimming is not included within the curriculum; however the school has made provision for parents to have sole access to the local pool with their children for half an hour a week.

Schemes of work for each subject make clear what has to be taught and help to promote continuity and progression. The nursery and kindergarten follow the nationally recommended early learning goals and the transition class dovetails the early years provision effectively with more formal teaching. From Form 1 to Form 3 the school follows the programmes of study for all the subjects of the National Curriculum. However, these are used flexibly to take account of pupils' individual levels and stages of development.

There is a good emphasis on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy. By the time pupils reach the end of Form 3 they can all read fluently, write in cursive script and speak confidently to a range of different audiences. In mathematics, pupils can solve problems using the four operations. They recognise patterns and relationships in numbers and calculation; for example, the use of an inverse operation to check the accuracy of a result. The provision for science enables pupils to develop their understanding of living things, materials and physical processes systematically as they progress through the school. Pupils enjoy developing their artistic and design and technology skills, but have limited access to ICT. A music specialist provides individual tuition for pupils to learn a range of musical instruments. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is covered as a subject in its own right as well as through other subjects, for example, religious education (RE), science, physical education (PE) and cooking. Pupils learn to respect those whose faith and culture differs from their own. They appreciate the importance of healthy living and the value being kind and considerate. Pupils learn how to become positively assertive while remaining polite and gentle. A good example of this was seen in the playground, when pupils were able to sort out their differences constructively and amicably.

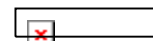
The school provides very well for pupils who are below compulsory school age. These pupils have access to a wide range of exciting activities which support their cognitive development and help them to learn how to share and co-operate with others. A good example of this is the use of movement and music which helps to improve pupils' coordination and their confidence in their physical abilities.

The curriculum enables all pupils to learn and make progress. In a minority of cases there is not always a sufficient amount of differentiation to ensure that the progress made by the highest and lowest attaining pupils is consistently good. The individual education plans for pupils identified as

having special educational needs are helpful and include an appropriate amount of detail and achievable targets. However, this information is not always acted upon in lessons.

The curriculum provision is enhanced by outings to places of interest which support what pupils have been learning. A recent trip by pupils in Form 1 to Hampton Court helped to bring history to life. Pupils enjoyed dressing up in period costume and took part in a workshop about the life of Henry VIII.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



In over half of the 21 lessons observed, the teaching was judged to be good. In nearly all of the remaining lessons, while there were some weaknesses, these were outweighed by the strengths. The overall quality of teaching in the early years is a strength of the school.

In nearly all the lessons there were very good relationships between staff and pupils. This contributed to pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their eagerness to respond to their teachers and to participate in activities. The majority of lessons were well planned with teachers having taken into account the progress that pupils had made in previous lessons.

Pupils are usually very well behaved during and outside of lessons, they are respectful and helpful to their teachers and to each other.

The teaching throughout the school enables pupils to make good progress and the overall level of attainment is high. The small class sizes and the quality of the relationships help teachers to know their pupils extremely well. This enables them to take more account of pupils' prior attainment and aptitudes when planning and delivering lessons. Teachers demonstrate a good level of knowledge about their subjects and of pupils' individual needs. However, they do not always make sufficient use of the available resources or different strategies to inspire and motivate pupils.

In the best lessons teachers have a good understanding of the different ways in which pupils learn. The purpose of the lesson and the learning objectives are understood by all pupils and there is clear and explicit teaching of new vocabulary. Teachers help to make learning more meaningful by including relevant cross-curricular links and a good range of appropriate activities.

A good example of this was seen in a Form 1 science lesson in which pupils were learning about growing plants. The lesson began with a short story about Sam and a ladybird planting a sunflower seed. This captivated pupils' interest from the start and the teacher helped pupils to recall the conditions required for a seed to germinate. Key words were written on the board and the teacher helped pupils to understand their meaning. Pupils were then encouraged to estimate the extent to which their bean had grown and to check this using a ruler. Working in pairs pupils shared and discussed ideas about why some beans had sprouted and others had not. They learnt from first hand experience that in order to grow, plants need air, light and water.

Another example of good teaching was seen in a history lesson on the Roman army for pupils in Forms 2 and 3. The form teacher had good subject knowledge and was able to answer questions about armour and weaponry. The pupils were taught the names of various items of equipment, ranks and military formations in English and Latin. A video had been carefully chosen to illustrate aspects of Roman life in Britain and some useful handouts had been provided to supply further information. The pupils were exclusively boys and the topic appealed to them; they responded very well. Some good questioning challenged them to speculate why, for example the Roman army had found it hard to recruit towards the end of its time in Britain.

In the minority of less successful lessons there were some common weaknesses. In these lessons

pupils were not all sufficiently engaged or motivated; there were limited opportunities for them to speculate or investigate and this reduced the amount of creative thinking pupils were encouraged to do. The range of activities did not always reflect an appreciation of the different ways in which pupils learn and there were insufficient strategies to meet the needs of the lowest and the highest attaining pupils. In some lessons, there was an over-use of worksheets at the expense of more enjoyable and productive practical activities.

The school is well resourced in all areas with the exception of ICT. There is a good range of books in the library and published schemes to support pupils' reading, writing and mathematics.

There is good provision for additional one-to-one support for pupils who are either not as advanced as their peers or have been identified as having special educational needs. Teaching assistants also provide good support during lessons. However, for a small minority of pupils there are insufficient support structures and strategies in place in the classroom to enable them to achieve as well as they could.

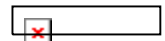
The school makes effective use of a wide range of assessment procedures including the use of national tests. This enables teachers to evaluate the performance of pupils against national norms and the school's own aims. The quality of marking is variable and not always sufficiently linked to learning objectives. Older pupils would welcome more written comments, particularly in their mathematics books. They appreciate the positive oral feedback they receive but find it difficult at times to recall all the helpful teaching points.

The achievement of pupils in mathematics and English is consistently high and well above the national average by the time pupils reach the end of Form 3. The vast majority of parents believe that their child is achieving well and that they are kept informed about their child's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. There is a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere; pupils enjoy coming to school and are happy. They are polite, very well behaved and articulate. Pupils are encouraged to value each other's individuality; they mix well together and cooperate at work and at play. They understand and respect the prominently displayed rules of the school. They report that they like being part of a small community and knowing all the other pupils well.

Some of the older pupils take on responsibilities such as house captaincies and looking after younger children at playtimes. They are encouraged to discuss issues of right and wrong. Visitors such as a policeman and local politicians give them a good understanding of the institutions and services of modern Britain. At the time of the inspection, the pupils had a very good knowledge of the general election that was taking place.

Spiritual awareness is raised mainly through assemblies and RE. Pupils visit a local church and other places of worship including a Thai temple and a synagogue, as part of their religious studies. The local vicar and representatives of other faiths have visited the school to talk to pupils. In some subjects such as science, the pupils begin to appreciate some of the wonders of nature when observing how beans germinate and tadpoles grow. There is a strong emphasis on supporting charities and helping others. Pupils suggest charities for the school to support. This encourages pupils to consider the circumstances of others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are taught

how to greet each other using sign language.

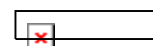
The pupils are taught to appreciate cultural diversity and respect the values and beliefs of others. At an appropriate level for the age of the pupils, this is achieved through the school's programme of RE, and subjects such as PHSE, art, history and geography. For example, visits to museums or other places of interest help to extend pupils' awareness of their own and others' cultural heritages. Many of the pupils have experience of the wider world and the school makes good use of this knowledge; parents and other visitors tell the children of life in other countries.

The headteacher makes a point of greeting the pupils at the beginning of the day and shakes their hands when they leave on Fridays.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school makes very good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. A range of policies and procedures address all aspects of pupils' welfare. The staff are very caring, know the pupils well and provide them with a safe and secure environment in which to learn. Pupils are closely supervised at all times on the school premises. The admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with regulations.

Risk assessments are undertaken for all aspects of school life and for visits. Appropriate records of pupils with special medical conditions or needs are kept and made known to relevant staff. Accidents are recorded, and there are sufficient members of staff qualified in First Aid. Appropriate arrangements are made for the care of pupils who are taken ill.

The school has made good provision for fire safety. There are regular fire drills, appliances are checked and fire risk assessments carried out. Potential safety hazards are reported conscientiously and action is taken to minimise these or carry out necessary repairs and maintenance as quickly as possible.

The headteacher has designated responsibility for child protection. The school is aware of the appropriate guidelines and staff are alert to the need to protect pupils from abuse. The designated person for child protection has not yet undertaken training to a standard set by the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC). This is now required as a result of recently introduced legislation. Steps have been taken to obtain such training.

The school, in conjunction with its parent schools, is committed to reviewing and amending access and facilities should a disabled child be admitted. There is an appropriate three-year plan to increase access that meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

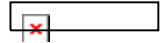
The school meets all the requirements except one, which was newly-introduced from January 2005.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- implement fully the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance: "Safeguarding Children in Education", which states that the designated person must undertake training to a standard set by the ACPC (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The school is registered with the Criminal Records Bureau and has confirmed the suitability of all staff to work with pupils, including part time and specialist staff.

Prior to the confirmation of the appointment of new staff the headteacher undertakes numerous checks. These include confirmation of an applicant's identity, their previous employment and the take up of professional references. However, systems to check the medical fitness and qualifications of staff before their appointment are insufficiently thorough.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

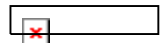
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that prior to the appointment of new staff the school should confirm their medical fitness and qualifications (paragraph 4(c)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school is housed in an attractive, 1930s two-storey building. Over the years it has been refurbished and remodelled to a high standard, and there are separate outbuildings which are used for assemblies, gymnastics, drama and other activities. Some classrooms are small and tend to become stuffy in warm weather. Movement around the main building can be difficult although the pupils respect the rules and move about sensibly. There are plans for a major extension to the main building to add more teaching space.

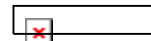
The premises are very well maintained, clean and welcoming. Classrooms and shared areas are tidy, well-organised and enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work. These rooms have suitable furniture and fittings. They are equipped with a good range of resources for teaching and learning with the exception of ICT. The arrangements for the consumption of packed lunches are adequate. There are sufficient toilets and washbasins and appropriate facilities for pupils who are taken ill.

There is sufficient outdoor space for pupils to play safely. The nursery has a secure and well equipped garden and outside area. The attractive grounds contain a good variety of play equipment and each class has its own garden plot where it can grow plants and vegetables. There is an enclosed sports area with a good quality hard surface. Because of the gender imbalance in the school, this tends to be monopolised by boys playing football at playtimes.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school meets all the regulations regarding the information provided for parents. Prospective parents are given a brochure providing information about the school and its proprietors, and about the curriculum and the various policies in place. There is regular and frequent contact between the staff and parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day.

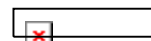
A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that they were happy with the information they receive from the school and feel welcome there.

The school provides a written report on each pupil twice a year apart from the children in the nursery whose parents receive a profile on their progress at the end of the year. The reports contain information on the work the pupils have covered and on their progress in each subject taught. It does not give the results of tests or assessments. Comments tend to be about attitudes and effort rather than what has been learnt. The reports do not contain targets for future attainment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

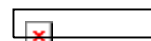


The school's complaints policy was recently updated and now meets the requirements in full. A copy of the policy is displayed on the parents' information board at the entrance of the school. A copy is also available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on request.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	The Rowans School		
DfES ref number:	315/6002		
Type of school:	Preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2½ - 8 Years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 46,	Girls 9,	Total 55
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 37,	Girls 28,	Total 65

Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,640 - £5,130
Address of school:	19 Drax Avenue Wimbledon London SW20 0EG
E-mail address:	therowansschool@btinternet.com
Telephone number:	020 89468220
Fax number:	020 89440822
Headteacher:	Mrs J Anderson
Proprietor:	Kings College School
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Gehane Gordelier HMI
Dates of inspection:	3 - 5 May 2005

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