



# Rowhill School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 119045  
**LEA** Kent  
**Inspection number** 280447  
**Inspection dates** 20 January 2006 to 20 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Steven Parker AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Stock Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Dartford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16		Kent DA2 7BZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 225490
<b>Number on roll</b>	121	<b>Fax number</b>	01322 291433
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Colin Etheridge
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Steve McGuinness

<b>Age group</b> 5 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 20 January 2006 - 20 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280447
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Rowhill is a day special school, situated on the outskirts of Dartford. It was redesignated in September 2004 to provide for pupils with behaviour and learning difficulties from across the whole of West Kent. However, a quarter of the current pupils were in the school before its change of focus, and have a range of complex needs, including autism. During the transition stage, the school's pupil numbers are planned to fall to 96 by 2008 and it will be re-housed in new purpose built accommodation on the present site. There are three times as many boys as girls, and very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The overwhelming majority of pupils come from areas of social deprivation.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Rowhill is a good school, where the excellent care provided for pupils ensures that their personal development is outstanding and their behaviour is exemplary. The quality of education, including teaching, is good. As a result, all pupils make good progress and achieve equally well. Pupils' attitudes are outstanding and they are very enthusiastic about everything that they do in school. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to feel safe and secure. The needs of pupils with complex difficulties are very well met through the imaginative nurture group arrangements. Members of staff know the pupils very well and use that knowledge to plan their learning very effectively. Most pupils, however, are not fully involved in setting their own targets and assessing how well they are getting on. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has helped the whole school community to work together very successfully to deal with the disruption of re-organisation, whilst ensuring that provision continues to improve. The school knows itself well, and inspectors agree with their judgements about its quality. However, it does not make the best use of the considerable amount of information it gathers about its work and pupils' progress to inform its planning. Rowhill has developed and sustained highly successful partnerships with parents and other services and agencies. It provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- build on existing good practice with some older pupils to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in setting their own targets and evaluating the progress that they make towards them
- develop a more structured approach to collecting information and analysing the existing wealth of data available to inform planning more effectively.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. When considering the often very difficult experiences that many of the pupils with challenging behaviours have had in mainstream schools, prior to coming to Rowhill, a significant minority of them make very good progress. Pupils' attainment on entry is mostly well below national expectations, but many achieve accreditation in courses, such as GCSE art and design, Certificate of Achievement in food technology and entry level in GCSE English, mathematics and science, by the time they leave. Pupils who join the school in Years 1 to 6 get a good start, especially in communication and social skills. The school is ambitious for them to succeed and sets challenging but achievable targets, in a few instances in negotiation with a small number of older pupils. All targets are properly informed by teachers' good knowledge of how well pupils are doing. Throughout the school, pupils make particularly good progress in practical subjects such as art and design and physical education. Successful learning of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology means that they are well placed to benefit from the next

stage of their education. Girls and boys, pupils with different needs and the significant number of looked after children in the school all achieve equally well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

As the result of excellent support and guidance and a very well structured programme of personal, social and health education, pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and well-being. They have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and how to conduct themselves properly. Their cultural development is very good and their spiritual sensitivities are promoted very well. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school, many finding this a positive experience for the first time in their lives, and their attendance improves as a result. They have excellent attitudes to work, because of the way that learning is presented to them as something to enjoy. The outstanding pastoral support that pupils and their families receive encourages them to think carefully about how they feel. They learn how best to develop practical and effective ways of dealing with their difficulties. The school's excellent approach to managing pupils' often very challenging behaviour means that this improves very significantly over time. There have been no exclusions for a very long time, which is testament to the school's positive approach when this statistic is compared with the very high levels of exclusions that pupils experienced in their previous mainstream schools. Pupils say they feel safe and secure, because the staff look after them well. They are confident, for example, that any incidents of bullying will be dealt with quickly and effectively. The school encourages pupils to think of the needs of others. They make a very positive contribution to the life of the school, for example through their two school councils, and to the wider community through practical activities. Their future economic well-being is assured through very good basic and work skills training and carefully arranged work experience placements.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, helping pupils to learn successfully. The thoughtful organisation of pupils with complex needs into nurture groups is very effective, ensuring an exceptionally good match of work to meet their needs. Relationships are excellent and pupils' contributions to lessons are highly valued. There is very strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants to support learning and to manage challenging behaviour very well. Well presented teaching materials, as well as very good use of computers, and enrichment through a good range of visits into the community motivate pupils to learn. In the majority of lessons, good quality planning takes full account of the range of learning needs in the class. Occasionally, however, all pupils are given the same task, and this means that some find the work too easy and others struggle with what they have to do. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in a rich variety of activities. This is evident from the wide ranging, colourful

and interesting displays around the school. There is regular checking of pupils' written work and commercial schemes are used well to record achievements over time. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to negotiate their own learning objectives and be involved in assessing their progress against them over time.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's curriculum is good, because pupils follow relevant programmes across the full range of subjects, within a structure that is meaningful to their needs. There is a proper emphasis on the practical application of literacy and numeracy. There are plans in place to improve further the provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11. The school is making good progress in developing the curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 11, to meet better the needs of the new intake of more able pupils. Provision for a modern foreign language and music has improved. For secondary pupils there is a reasonable range of examination work, and plans are well advanced to widen their opportunities to follow certificated courses. There is very good provision for work related learning through mini enterprise, work experience, college courses, and very strong links with the Connexions careers adviser. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is given strong emphasis throughout the school. Pupils appreciate the many enrichment activities provided, for example residential visits, day trips, journey training, sports teams, clubs and community service.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding, with the recent introduction of home support workers playing a very important part in its effectiveness. Arrangements for child protection are excellent. There is an exceptionally strong emphasis on the care and support of individual pupils, and on celebrating their achievement. The commitment of staff to the health and safety of pupils is high and arrangements are securely in place to keep pupils safe, to deal with accidents should they occur, and to keep parents well informed. There are excellent procedures to follow up absences. Collaboration with other services provides outstanding co-ordinated provision for pupils with behaviour and learning difficulties, those with medical needs and vulnerable pupils. Risk assessments are well developed and there is regular updating of first aid training for staff. Arrangements for reviewing statements of special educational need are securely in place and very well managed. Parents are particularly appreciative of the sensitive way they are enabled to participate fully in the process. Careers guidance is firmly established. The assessment, monitoring and support of pupils' academic performance and personal development are good.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's outstanding leadership, through the example of his highly child-centred approach, has ensured that the school is coping very successfully with the significant changes in its character. He is ably supported by a very effective team of managers, who provide focused leadership in their well defined areas of responsibility. This, together with the much improved arrangements for subject management since the last inspection, means that many improvements have been effected to the curriculum, teaching and learning and pupils' achievement and well-being. A thoughtful approach to recruitment, induction and training has resulted in the creation of a staff group that works together as a very effective team. Careful management of the budget has meant that learning resources are much improved. The school has also accumulated a significant reserve, which will enable it to enhance provision in the new school when it is finally built. Governors provide good support and are becoming more effective at holding the school to account through asking challenging questions. The school has a clear picture of many aspects of its work, and benefits from the wealth of information it gets from pupils, parents and the outstanding links it has with other agencies and the wider community. It does not, however, have a properly structured approach to collecting and analysing data about some aspects of its work, including pupils' progress, and recognises the need for more rigour in this. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils As you know, I visited your school recently to find out how well you are getting on. Thank you for making my colleague and me feel so welcome, showing us your work, which really impressed us, and talking to us so confidently. We were particularly helped by listening to your views on how well the school helps you to learn and about how you appreciate the support you get from all the staff. What we liked about the school

- your school is a very happy place which has helped many of you to feel much more positive about learning than you did previously
- teachers are good at planning work that is just right for your needs, so that you learn successfully
- you get a lot of good guidance in learning how to manage your behaviour; this means that you behave exceptionally well and feel much better about yourselves
- you like school so much that your attendance is good
- the school helps your families to help you
- the headteacher is helping everyone to cope very well with the changes to your school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- to make sure you are properly involved in planning your own targets and finding out how well you are doing.
- to find better ways to show how effective Rowhill is in its work.

Yours faithfully Steven Parker Lead inspector