

# Rodney House School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 105616        |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Manchester    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 287277        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 14 June 2007  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Jeffery Plumb |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Special  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community special                                  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 2–6  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 46   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                 |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Dr D Jellinek                                      |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs M Codd   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 5 November 2001                                    |
| <b>School address</b>                     | 388 Slade Lane<br>Burnage<br>Manchester<br>M19 2HT |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 0161 2242774                                       |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 0161 2255186                                       |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The main function of the school is to assess children's special educational needs. All but two of the children are in the Foundation Stage. It provides for children with complex needs, including autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many have severe medical needs. Because of their acknowledged difficulties and/or disabilities, children's attainments are well below average. There are five classes, including a specific class for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school is part of the current local authority review of the provision for special educational needs. There has been a recent restructuring of the senior management team. As an assessment school it has a rotating door and a fluctuating population of children. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is significantly higher than the national average. The number of children from minority ethnic families where English is not the first spoken language is high, but like their peers from English speaking families most of them are non-verbal.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is well led and managed. The recently appointed acting headteacher put a visionary management structure to the governing body. It was accepted and put in place. It has resulted in significant benefits for all of the children, enriching their curriculum and raising their achievement. This has been achieved against a background of uncertainty about the future of the school in the context of provision for special educational needs being reviewed within the local authority. The accommodation is cramped and this is a barrier to the headteacher, especially in creating quiet spaces for children with autism to withdraw to when everything becomes too much for them. Overall, self-evaluation is good. However, the school's evaluation of care, guidance and support as outstanding is too generous because the good system put in place to track children's progress is still bedding down. Achievement is good. Children develop good communication and independence skills. Parents are delighted with the progress their children make. This is aptly summed up by the mother who said, 'My child is now saying words I thought I would never hear her say'. Personal development is good. The school encourages children to eat healthy food, take regular exercise and do as much as is possible for themselves.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers know children's needs well and work ceaselessly to meet them. Children with autism are successfully included with those who do not have autism. However, sometimes imaginative and exciting activities in lessons become too much for them. These activities are not consistently risk assessed for their suitability for children with autism. The effective curriculum is relevant and interesting. The outdoor environment is used well to improve children's physical development. However, it is not yet used sufficiently to promote other areas of learning such as creativity and mathematical development. The headteacher and governors have identified this and there is a plan to address the deficiency, but it has not yet been implemented. The sensory curriculum for children with the most profound difficulties is a significant strength. Health professionals and educational staff work as a dedicated team to ensure as many barriers to learning as possible are removed. For example, they ensure children are positioned perfectly to benefit from teaching and the right resources are made available. The effective system put in place to track children's progress has generated more relevant targets for them to master, although these are not yet consistently used. The school is on a journey of improvement; it has made considerable strides since the last inspection. Not complacent, the headteacher and dedicated team of teachers relentlessly strive and plan for further improvement. They are committed to the highest achievement for every child. The school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment more consistently to plan very specific learning outcomes for each child in every lesson to raise achievement.
- Carefully check the suitability of planned activities in lessons where children with autism are taught so as to minimize the risk of stress caused by too much noise and stimulus, and so improve their engagement with learning.
- Make better use of the outdoor environment to enhance the curriculum and ensure that there are opportunities to develop all areas of learning out of doors.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement in communication and independence is good but, because of their complex needs, standards are well below those found typically for children under five. Children learn to communicate effectively by pointing their finger, using pictures and signs and expressing their needs with words. When communication and independence go together parents are thrilled. For example, the parents of a little boy who now signs that he needs the toilet, goes independently and washes his hands afterwards without prompting, are over the moon. Higher achievers also make good progress. They link sounds, make marks with a pencil and a few grasp important mathematical concepts such as 'more than'. These children are included on certain days of the week in a mainstream setting to equip them for transition to such a setting full time. Striking progress in clapping in rhythm is made because of an exciting music programme. Children's physical development is also good in the context of their complex needs; for some that is movement of the eyes or head, but for others it is dancing like a butterfly.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Children enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their confidence and self-esteem are developed well through well-planned activities. Peeping inside a box with a mirror and seeing their reflection, a group of verbal children said with gorgeous smiles, 'We are special'. Some children have challenging behaviour related to their complex needs. Overall, behaviour is good and skilful management of behaviour is a strong feature. Attendance, given the medical needs of the youngest children, is good. For children of statutory school age it is above the national average. Children are equipped to form healthy relationships, join in activities at the right time, and to keep safe. They are asked what they like during the scheduled communication sessions, and what they say is used well to plan to raise their achievement. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The sensory garden is used effectively and results in children experiencing those magical moments of joy.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Overall, activities are planned well to meet children's learning and social needs. Relationships are excellent as is teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants. Good use is made of signing, pictures and visual cues to promote learning. Children with a hearing and/or visual impairment are carefully positioned to benefit from the teaching. Teachers confidently use interactive whiteboards to challenge children and make learning fun for them. Joined up planning ensures children develop communication and independence skills; they go hand in hand. Occasionally, fun game activities are too stimulating for children with autism and on these rare occasions this impedes their learning. Teachers are becoming more skilful at assessing children day by day, but do not always use what they learn about children from this rigorous assessment to plan very specific learning outcomes for them in lessons. There is some inconsistency of practice.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Each child has an individual learning plan tailored to meet his or her complex needs. Flexible planning of topics ensures that statutory requirements of the curriculum for children under five are met. In addition, planning takes account of the specific targets children have to master. Therapy is integral to the curriculum and benefits children's speech development and mobility. However, insufficient use is made of the outdoor play area to promote all areas of learning for the children. A very good enrichment programme ensures learning is fun and promotes children's fitness. Activities children enjoy are adopted to develop the hand movements required for writing skills. Good use is made of the community to ensure children have hands on experience of important life skills. For example, they go to the shops and handle real coins.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Education staff and health professionals work in an extremely effective partnership to ensure outstanding care for every child. Breakthroughs that occur as a result, such as children moving on from mashed food to eating chopped food and dressing independently, are greatly appreciated by parents. Excellent physiotherapist support has contributed to a child not walking when she joined the school taking her first steps: her mum is overjoyed. Induction and transition arrangements are excellent. Child protection procedures are robust. Health and safety checks are thorough. Dignity underlies the giving of medicines and toileting. However, activities in lessons are not consistently risk assessed in respect of the impact they may have on children with autism. Bubbly and noisy activities with much stimulus benefit the majority of children, but occasionally cause distress to children with autism in the same class. This is exacerbated by cramped accommodation, which prevents the teachers from creating a quiet area in their classrooms. Tracking of children's progress is good. Staff are becoming effective in setting targets at the right level to enhance children's learning and social development, but the system is at an early stage of development.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. Governance is effective. The headteacher's leadership is inspirational. She has resiliently and successfully steered the school through an uncertain time, in the context of the local authority's review of provision for special educational needs. Change has been managed to benefit the children. The innovative management structure put in place has improved assessment, raised achievement and brought about an innovative curriculum. However, because so much development is new, the school has not yet been able to evaluate outcomes of its actions thoroughly. Priorities on the school's improvement plan are focused, realistic and have a positive impact on raising achievement. Good systems are in place for checking performance and taking decisive action to drive further improvement. The school has good capacity to improve.

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## Annex A

## 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> |
|--|-----------------------|

### 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   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

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**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

It was lovely to meet you. I enjoyed working with a small group of you. It made me so happy when you looked at yourselves in a mirror at the bottom of a box, and said with smiling faces, 'We are special'. It is so true - you are very special. It made me happy when you showed me how you dance like a butterfly.

I think your school is good. Teachers and teaching assistants help you to make your needs known. So many of you are learning to feed and dress yourselves. Mrs Codd and your teachers look after you so well. Your lessons are fun and help you learn. You learn so well through playing games which you enjoy.

There are a few things that will make your school an even better place to be. I have asked Mrs Codd and her staff to use what they know about you in an even better way when planning your next steps in learning. I have also asked her to make sure that your activities are not too noisy, so that they do not upset you and prevent you from doing your best. Finally, I would like them to make the play that you do outside even more exciting for you.

I think that you are going to become even better in letting people know what you want and in doing things by yourselves.