

Rowan Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104983
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	308725
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	110
6th form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Duffy
Headteacher	Mrs J Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
School address	Sterrix Lane Litherland Bootle Merseyside L21 0DB
Telephone number	0151 2224894
Fax number	-

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Rowan Park is a newly built special school for children and young people who have statements of special educational need because of their severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). More than half of the learners have additional barriers to learning including physical disabilities (PD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), multiple disabilities and visual impairment (MDVI) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Because of their LDD, they are very much below average on entry to the school. Almost all of them are White British and in all cases English is their home language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is a happy and lively school. It is very successful in enabling those who attend to develop the communication, social and life skills they will need for life beyond school. Its overall effectiveness is outstanding. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress from an extremely low base. They leave the early years class having made useful gains in their communication, language, social and self-help skills. Students in Years 1 to 11 including those with more profound disabilities and difficulties make excellent progress overall. They achieve best in mathematics, science and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Their achievement in English is good. Students in the post-16 classes achieve very well. They develop life skills and social competencies and prepare for the world of work and life beyond school. These exceptional outcomes are chiefly brought about by excellent teaching and learning. Teachers and all staff have a thorough understanding of how to get the best out of each young person. They use imaginative methods that appeal to all the senses. Lessons are cheerful and often filled with merriment. Children, pupils and students flourish in this positive climate. The teaching of those with MDVI or ASD is first rate.

The curriculum is very successful in meeting the diverse needs of learners. Very good use is made of electronic aids to communication and of augmentative methods such as picture exchange that enable individuals to take a full part in lessons. The specially adapted work for those with MDVI and ASD meets their needs very well. A small number of accredited courses at an appropriate level are provided. However, the school does not yet offer pupils and students access to sufficient externally accredited courses. There is very good take up of the opportunities provided to continue learning outside lessons. Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent.

Attendance is good. The children and young people are very sure that they are safe at school and that there is always an adult to whom they can turn if they are unhappy. They celebrate and appreciate the many different cultures represented in our society. They love to help others. The school supports and guides them exceptionally well. It takes effective steps to monitor their performance and development. Its safeguarding procedures are strong and understood by all staff members. It maintains the closest possible links with parents who appreciate this and consider the school to be excellent.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school has made the best use of its new premises and resources to enable those who attend to achieve as much as they can. The newly established leadership team is vigilant in monitoring all aspects of the school's performance and knows the steps that should be taken to bring about further improvement. The morale of the staff is high and they pull together to ensure that individuals are always given the best possible chance to succeed. Governance is good. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent and the leadership team is very well placed to bring about further improvement. The school provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students in the post-16 classes respond very well to an environment that recognises and celebrates their increasing maturity. They further improve their basic skills and their hard work is accredited at an appropriate level. They are very well taught and their performance is closely

monitored. The support and guidance they receive is excellent and the school fully involves other agencies such as Connexions, colleges and work-related learning providers in meeting their needs. All of this prepares them to take the next step after school with confidence. Leadership of the sixth form is exceptionally effective.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the early years class from resourced nurseries. They have very severe LDD. They have no speech and are at a very early stage in forming relationships. A high proportion have physical disabilities and all are dependent on adults for every aspect of personal care. However, they respond well to the stimulating learning environment provided for them. They begin to make significant gains particularly in listening to and following instructions, communicating their needs and feelings, and relating to others. The early years class is successful in enabling children to become more sociable and communicative. This helps them to make good progress towards their early learning goals. Teaching and learning are good and the children are very well supported and guided. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in English to the level of achievement in mathematics, science and PSHE.
- Introduce externally accredited courses in Key Stage 4 and develop more opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 and in the post-16 classes to gain qualifications.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The youngest children make good progress towards their early learning goals. Students in Years 1 to 11 make exceptional progress. Their achievement is compared against a national cohort of students of similar age and with similar starting points. In 2007 all made gains in English, mathematics, science and PHSE with most surpassing the levels predicted for them. Best progress was made in mathematics, science and PHSE. In some year groups all students exceeded their targets in one or more of these subjects. In English, however, progress was more modest and fewer than half of students exceeded their predicted grade. At the end of Year 11 ten students received external accreditation for their work in music gaining AQA unit awards. Seven students in the post-16 group successfully completed the modules of their ASDAN course.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

From the youngest to the oldest, throughout their time in the school, the children and young people continue to develop awareness of their feelings and how to express these appropriately. They enjoy school very much. Attendance is good. Any absence is always for a compelling reason most frequently because of the need for continuing medical interventions or because of illnesses to which these young people are especially vulnerable. Behaviour is excellent. Children, pupils and students are very considerate of one another and obey the school rules. As they grow older they show increasing confidence and developing social skills. The elected

members of the school council are very proud to represent their classmates and other members of the school. The council is very active in fundraising and in promoting the social life of all who attend the school. It is an outstanding example of individuals making their voice heard to the benefit of the school community. The willingness of those who are able to help and support the younger and more vulnerable is also exceptional. Post-16 students act as buddies to younger children helping them to safely enjoy their playtime. Students perform services for the school community, for example, preparing the fruit for children in the primary classes. Individuals empathise with others less fortunate than themselves and strongly support local and national charities. Attitudes to school are very good. Levels of attention to the learning task and happy participation in lessons are outstanding. Children, pupils and students adopt healthy lifestyles and are well informed about the need to eat sensibly and keep active. They join happily in the opportunities for exercise, games and sport that the school provides.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Many lessons are happy and fun-filled. Individuals respond extremely well to the exciting and relevant activities provided for them by their teachers. Classroom teams are generally extremely effective and in some cases they are superb. All teachers assess individuals thoroughly and know them very well. Lessons are, therefore, well planned to take full account of their capabilities. The specialist teachers of those with MDVI or ASD are highly expert. The potentially disruptive behaviour that arises because of the LDD of a minority of those who attend is very well managed. Imaginative use is made of techniques that involve all the senses in order to stimulate learning. Use of alternative and augmented communication is generally good and sometimes brilliant when the potential of electronic devices is fully exploited to give those without speech the chance to join fully in lessons. Specialist subject teachers greatly enhance learning experiences for older pupils and students. This is particularly successful in art and music.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

There is an appropriately strong emphasis on enabling children, pupils and students to communicate effectively and develop the social and life skills that will stand them in good stead when they leave school. Literacy is strongly promoted in ways that are carefully tailored to the capacity of learners and the nature of their needs. Provision for numeracy is very good and for students in the post-16 classes aspects such as the management of money are taught practically and directly in real-life situations. Provision for children and young people with MDVI and ASD is excellent. All children and young people at the school benefit from the excellent use of multi-sensory approaches in lessons. Alternative means of communication are used very well, including picture exchange communication systems and signing, to give individuals the best chance of understanding what is required. Links with colleges and workplace learning providers ensure that the post-16 curriculum has breadth and relevance. Opportunities are provided for students to have some of their work accredited at an appropriate level. Over time, their levels of achievement have improved. However, they do not yet have the opportunity to have their

achievement recognised by the fuller provision of accredited courses especially at Key Stage 4. Social and cultural experiences enhance the curriculum very well. Older pupils and students have the opportunity to take part in residential visits to an outdoor activities centre. There is an after-school club but no lunchtime clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Staff are very strongly committed to individuals' best interests. Provision for safeguarding children is thorough. The school policy for child protection is reviewed annually. All those that work at the school know what is expected of them. Careful risk assessments are made for all activities beyond normal routine. The progress of children, pupils and students is monitored thoroughly. Personal and academic targets are set through individual education plans. Individuals and their carers help to review these each term. Teachers and classroom staff are very skilful in giving learners praise and promoting their confidence. They also make clear to them what they must do to improve. The school makes very good provision to guide and support students who are due to leave school. Links with other agencies, including Connexions, are strong and promote the interests of students very well. The school ensures that vulnerable students receive the support they need. When necessary it links effectively with the health authority and social services to provide young people with help. The high degree of care that the school provides for those who attend and their carers is very well illustrated by its strong commitment to Rainbows, an organisation that provides support for children and their families at times of loss or bereavement. This work is very much appreciated by families. Parental regard for the school is exceptional. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and rate the school very highly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The headteacher and the leadership team have been very successful in raising standards of achievement and improving provision for the well-being of learners. Their impact on the school has been excellent. All staff share a common sense of purpose. They are focused on promoting the achievement and personal development of learners. The school reviews its performance and procedures rigorously. In doing this it seeks the views of its stakeholders. It takes these into account in making its plans for improvement. The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development and its plans for improvement are carefully prioritised. Through careful planning the leadership team has established effective provision for those with MDVI and it is continuing to improve this. The school is inclusive. Where this can be done safely all that it offers is open to all who attend irrespective of their difficulties. Vetting procedures are robust and safe recruitment practices are followed. Governors carry out their duties well and critically examine the performance of the school and its leaders. The use of resources is very effective. Relationships with outside agencies are extremely positive.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Rowan Park School, Bootle, Merseyside, L21 0DB.

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited your school this week. It was very good of you to talk to me and answer my questions so well. I really enjoyed our conversations and seeing you in your lessons.

You told me that your school is a great place that you enjoy coming to. You love joining in all the lessons and activities and meeting your friends. You feel very safe at school and you are sure that there will always be a grown-up to whom you can turn if you are unhappy. You know a lot about how to keep healthy. I was very impressed by your decision to stock the tuck shop with healthy drinks and snacks instead of chocolate, sweets and fizzy drinks. Those of you who are members of the school council take your job very seriously and know that you must do your best for all the other pupils.

From talking to your headteacher and the staff, looking at records of your work and spending time in lessons I found that your school is exceptionally good and helps you achieve as much as you can. The following is clear.

- You make excellent progress in mathematics, science and PSHE.
- You make good progress in English.
- Many of you are ready to take more courses to gain certificates.
- You are given interesting things to do, lessons are often fun and you are taught very well.
- Over the time you are in the school you become friendly, helpful and confident. You think of others and enjoy art and customs different from those you are most used to.
- The school takes care of you exceptionally well and makes sure you have the support you need.
- Leadership and management are excellent.

To make your school even better I have asked your headteacher to:

- help you achieve even more in English
- give you a wider choice of courses to gain certificates.