

# The Rowan School

Inspection report - amended

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 107171              |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Sheffield           |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 309336              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 22–23 November 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Christine Emerson   |

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>                | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 63   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The local authority  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Avril Young  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 25 May 2004  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | 4 Durvale Court<br>Furniss Avenue<br>Sheffield<br>South Yorkshire<br>S17 3PT |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 0114 2350479   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 0114 2350478   |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 4-11                |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 22–23 November 2007 |
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## Amended Report Addendum

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a school for primary aged pupils with complex speech, language and communication disorders. Most pupils have an autistic spectrum disorder. The majority of pupils join the school after a mainstream placement has been unsuccessful. Consequently, the current number of children in the Foundation Stage is very low. The majority of pupils have significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities and standards are therefore low. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of girls in the school is very low. Around 16% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils have English as an additional language.

During the academic year 2006-07 several key members of staff were on long-term absence due to ill health.

## 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 with outstanding features. It provides good value for money. The quality of care, support and guidance which pupils receive and their personal development are outstanding. Relationships with a variety of outside agencies and with parents and carers are extremely strong and support all aspects of pupils' development very well. Parents particularly value the good opportunities they are given to work in partnership with the school. This is clearly shown through comments such as, 'The school has a lovely welcoming and relaxed atmosphere and genuinely seeks to involve us as parents in an ongoing manner.'

Through activities such as the daily snack times, pupils make very good progress in learning how to make choices to keep themselves safe and healthy. This is recognised by the Healthy School and Activemark awards which the school holds. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. Through taking on small responsibilities they gain in confidence and make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Members of the school council are proud of the work they have done to help to develop the outside play area. Activities such as the recent project where pupils worked with a local firm to plan, dig and plant a vegetable patch in the school grounds prepare them well for the world of work. Through participating in programmes such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme, pupils make very good progress in learning social skills and in distinguishing right from wrong. Assemblies are used effectively to celebrate pupils' efforts and to enhance their spiritual development. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well academically. This is because teaching is good and adapted very well to the particular needs of pupils with communication and/or autistic spectrum disorders. However, because teachers do not always make it clear what individual pupils are to learn, it is sometimes hard to measure accurately the progress they make in lessons. The curriculum is good with a strong focus on developing pupils' communication and independent learning skills.

The headteacher, well supported by the leadership team and governing body, provides strong and effective leadership to move the school forward. However, at the present time, the school does not have an entirely accurate picture of the impact of some aspects of its provision on pupils' achievement. This is because during the last school year, opportunities for monitoring and evaluation were limited due to the absence of some key members of staff. Since September 2007, the school has begun to re-establish suitable monitoring systems, but these are not yet fully effective in raising pupils' achievement further. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and has a good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage offers children a good start to their education. The experienced staff team works very well together to help children to settle in and to learn the essential skills of 'good sitting, looking, and listening'. They are skilled at teaching the children to use the visual systems, which are in place throughout the school, to support communication. Children's progress is carefully tracked and monitored. This shows that children make particularly strong progress in developing their speaking and listening and attention and interaction skills.

Relationships in the Foundation Stage are very positive and there is a happy 'family' atmosphere. This helps children to feel safe and secure so that they can learn well.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop and consolidate the systems to monitor and evaluate how well the school is doing and to raise pupils' achievement further.
- Ensure that all teachers make it clear what individual pupils are to learn during lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Throughout the school pupils make good progress against the challenging targets set in their individual education plans, with some pupils making outstanding progress. During the last school year 72% of targets were met. This year the school is aiming to achieve 80% of the targets set. The detailed assessment profiles kept by the school indicate that pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and personal and social development. The school identified a weakness in achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) and put in strategies to boost performance so that pupils now also achieve well in ICT. Performance in the Year 6 national tests is variable in different years reflecting the particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities of pupils taking the tests. For example, in 2006 no pupils were working at a high enough level to take the tests, whereas in 2007 several pupils achieved the nationally expected levels for their age. The focus on communication and interaction, which permeates all lessons, is very effective in developing pupils' confidence and skills to communicate using spoken language and/or symbols. Consequently, pupils make particularly good progress in speaking and listening. All pupils, including pupils from minority ethnic groups, make equally good progress.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' attendance is good because they really enjoy coming to school. There have been few exclusions and very little bullying. Although the behaviour of some pupils can be challenging, the majority of pupils respond very well to the school's effective strategies to improve their behaviour. Parents and carers highlight improvements in the behaviour of their children as one of the strengths of the school. For example, a typical parental comment was that her son's 'general behaviour has improved tenfold'. Children in the Foundation Stage make strong progress in learning how to behave in a school setting. As they move up the school, pupils grow in confidence to express their opinions in lessons and through the school council. They make a very good contribution to the life of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils make very good progress in learning how to stay safe and healthy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good overall with some outstanding practice. Teachers and support staff work effectively together to provide very good individual support for pupils. Consequently, all pupils are fully included in lessons and make good progress. Relationships are very strong and any challenging behaviour is managed well. Staff are particularly skilled at implementing specialist

teaching strategies for pupils with communication and/or autistic spectrum disorders. This supports the development of pupils' communication skills very well. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to motivate pupils and make lessons interesting. Assessment of pupils' progress in different subjects is thorough. However, not all teachers make it clear what individual pupils are to learn during lessons and as a result the progress made by pupils during lessons is not always measurable.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is adapted very effectively to meet the particular needs of pupils. For example, the creation of 'low distraction' environments and structured routines helps the pupils to focus well and make good progress. Accommodation and resources have improved significantly since the last inspection. In particular, the creation of a nurture room and a white room has enabled the school to better meet the needs of pupils with more complex difficulties. Pupils say that they enjoy the many improvements which have been made to the large outside play area, including the new play equipment. The curriculum is enriched by residential visits and a good variety of interesting activities such as yoga. A suitable scheme to teach about sex and relationships has recently been developed to enhance the current provision for pupils' personal and social development, but it has not yet been implemented.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Systems to ensure pupils' health and safety, including child protection procedures, are well established. Strong links with a variety of agencies ensure that particularly vulnerable pupils, such as those with more complex difficulties, are supported very well. Carefully designed behavioural programmes and individual reward systems are effective in improving pupils' behaviour. Pupils are involved well in setting and evaluating their own targets and know exactly what the targets are. Staff are skilled at promoting pupils' personal development by quickly praising them for clearly specified behaviours such as 'good sitting'. Marking in work books celebrates pupils' efforts and shows them what they can do to make their work even better. Extremely strong links with parents enhance the care which the school offers. An example of this is the 'every child matters week' where the school offered sessions for parents covering a variety of topics such as how to create a healthy and attractive packed lunch. Very good procedures help pupils to successfully transfer to secondary placements.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership team is now effectively moving the school forward again following a period of staff illness which placed limitations on the opportunities for monitoring and evaluating the school's effectiveness. Self-evaluation procedures are being re-established in order to secure further improvements to pupils' overall achievement. The headteacher sets a very clear direction for the school and provides very good support and guidance for staff. Governors bring a very good range of relevant expertise to the school. They support the school well and are not afraid to challenge the leadership team where necessary. In particular, the governors have worked effectively with the headteacher to make the best use of the school's budget. The school's development plan accurately identifies key priorities and is accessible to the leadership team,

governors and other staff on the Internet. This is an effective way of involving all members of the school team in school development. The school is currently working towards achieving Investor in People status.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| 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   | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

### The quality of provision

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

<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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 3   |
| 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  |

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

Inspection of The Rowan School, Sheffield, S17 3PT

I know that some of you find reading difficult, so your teachers will tell you about this letter. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you. It was very useful to know what you think about your school.

Your parents and carers think you go to a good school and I agree with them.

There are some things that are really good about your school. These include:

- the excellent care and support which you are given so that you feel safe and can do well
- the fun activities which you enjoy such as the dragon fly coming into school
- the really good progress which you make in learning to communicate what you think
- the fantastic playground that you have helped to plan and develop.

All of this is possible because the staff do a good job and try their best to make the school as good as they can for you.

I have asked your teachers to improve two things to make your school even better. These are:

- to develop systems so that they know how well the school is doing and help you to achieve even more
- to make sure that they know exactly what they want each of you to achieve in lessons.

I hope you carry on enjoying what you are doing and continue to help your teachers all you can.