

Redwood

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135202
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	329052
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Saleem Hussain

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	225
Sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Sherriff
Headteacher	Mr S Pidgeon
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hudsons Walk Rochdale Lancashire OL11 5EF
Telephone number	01706 750815
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Redwood opened in September 2007 following an extensive local authority review of special educational needs provision in the area. Effectively, the school is an amalgamation of five special schools. This is the school's first inspection. It is co-located with a mainstream secondary school and language college which share the campus.

The school caters for students who in the main have severe and often complicated learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These include profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism, communication and language difficulties, sensory impairment, specific learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Some pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A significant proportion of pupils are from socially and economically disadvantaged areas with around half eligible for free school meals. The proportion of minority ethnic students is above the national average, as is the number learning English as an additional language. All students have statements of special educational need. The school has achieved the National Healthy Schools Award and Sportsmark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Redwood is a good school with some outstanding aspects. It provides good value for money. Representative views from parents include, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds due to all the skilful teaching' and 'my son loves going to school, he is very happy and nothing is too much trouble for staff.' Though standards are low owing to the complex nature and extent of students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achievement is good. Students make good progress in their English, mathematics and science. Work seen during inspection in art and design and technology is stunning. Students make progress across the school because the quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features. Teachers and their assistants know students' special needs very well and structure the lessons in a way that engages them effectively. Stimulating presentation of work captures students' interest and so they enjoy working hard. However, the pace of work in a few lessons is not as good as it could be and this slightly reduces the progress made.

The school has a very strong family ethos. Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that students develop very high levels of self-confidence and leads to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students' wonderful poetry reflects this. For example, a poem about 'My Mum' says, 'She stays strong; though she can be blown sideways, her roots are firm; I want to be like my mum.'

The school works exceptionally well with outside agencies to ensure students' well-being and medical care. Links with other schools and colleges are outstanding. For example, initiatives with the adjacent secondary school enable students to take advantage of many opportunities including use of the science facilities. A good number of students join in swimming sessions and attended courses such as media studies at another local secondary school.

The curriculum is outstanding. Students are excited by the vast array of learning opportunities in each key stage. They love the many chances to gain experiences in all the required areas of learning based on practical work. Lunchtime and after school activities, school and residential trips locally and abroad, provide sparkling additions to the curriculum.

Personal development is outstanding. Students are very thoughtful, considerate and respectful. They have a great sense of fun. Students also develop tremendous inner resilience, for example, they defend their points of view vigorously and stick up for each other if they sense injustice. Behaviour is outstanding. Students enjoy school life very much and attendance is good. Students develop very positive attitudes towards healthy and safe living. They participate in sports and dance very enthusiastically. Students' contribution to the community is outstanding. The school council has made many impressive suggestions leading to school improvement. In view of students' achievements, the many accreditations they gain and personal development, their preparedness for the future is outstanding.

Leadership and management are good with outstanding elements. The impact is seen in the good achievements of students and their outstanding personal development. The headteacher's very clear vision is shared at all levels and has resulted in a unity of purpose across the school. Inclusion lies at the heart of the school's work and everyone has excellent chances to participate in all that the school has to offer. The governing body is experienced and supports the school exceptionally well through its role as 'critical friend'. Self-evaluation is penetrating and insightful, leading to very effective improvement planning. The school has firmly established itself in a

relatively short period of time and risen magnificently to the challenges of merging five former school communities. This demonstrates an excellent capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good with some outstanding elements. Provision is carefully checked to ensure that it is responsive to students' needs. Students are very happy with the educational provision and achieve well. The curriculum is outstanding. This ensures that students' interests are met very effectively. Students have many opportunities to gain external accreditations. The chances to develop vocational and independent life skills are excellent. The school has very successfully trialled a 'bridging course' for a small number of students which is extremely well focused around work related experiences through college placements. This is a model of good practice in terms of its structure and breadth of rich, practical learning opportunities. Personal development is outstanding. Students are very mature, caring and considerate of others. The quality of teaching is good with outstanding features. Care and guidance are extremely strong.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of work in lessons where necessary, so that students make even more progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All students achieve equally well, regardless of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ethnicity or gender. Those with the most complex difficulties, for example, move forward in very small steps. Their achievements are just as good as those with other learning difficulties and/or disabilities who might make quicker progress. Communication and language development is often a strong focus in learning and so students make good progress in this area. Where necessary, the spoken word is accompanied by the use of pictures, symbols and aids that enable students to understand and be understood. Accreditation at Key Stage 4 includes literacy, numeracy, science, independence and life skills. In the sixth form, students are similarly successful and good numbers gain accreditations in English, mathematics, computer skills and vocational education. Many students gain accreditation in food and safety awareness. In 2008 a small number of students were successful in achieving good grades in GCSE art.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Remarkable personal development makes an excellent contribution to learning. Parents confirm that their children are managed especially well and that behaviour is outstanding. Members of the school council demonstrate a maturity and willingness to contribute to the school community which stretches way beyond their years. Their work on dealing with bullying in special schools is shortly to be published and made available nationally. Students love acting as wheelchair facilitators and monitors. Students respect difference and value the rich diversity of their own and other cultures in the world. For example, regarding the wearing of veils by women in Islam, students say that this is a matter of choice, just as it is a matter of choice to wear a cross in Christianity. These factors also show the impact of the school's good work to promote community cohesion.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have a very good awareness of students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This ensures that lesson activities are generally very well matched to students' individual needs. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught well. Adults encourage students to use all their senses whenever possible to help them to learn. Relationships between adults and students are very strong and this helps students to feel confident and secure as they learn. Teamwork between adults in the classroom is very good. All these characteristics were seen, for example, in an outstanding science lesson about seed germination. Students made excellent progress because the learning targets very closely matched their needs and they enjoyed using all their senses. However, the pace of work in some lessons is a little slow at times. This meant that students do not always make as much progress as they could do. Assessment procedures are strong. The information collected about students' attainment is used well by teachers to plan future lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A very enjoyable curriculum in each key stage ensures that personal development is outstanding and academic achievement is good. There are many excellent chances to learn through the sensory curriculum. The outstanding range of accreditations on offer includes basic skills in literacy, numeracy, science, independence, life and enterprise skills. All students gain a variety of certificates by the time they leave. Careers guidance is effective. Key Stage 4 students enjoy their work and college placements very much. These enable students to prepare for their future economic well-being very effectively. The range of after school clubs and enrichment activities is phenomenal. For example, students can participate in many activities such as football, sailing and Tai Chi. Students' success in sports competitions such as athletics, is staggering. Themed weeks such as European week add a further dimension to the curriculum. Education for safety, health and well-being is excellent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Students are treasured as individuals. They thrive because of the excellent commitment of staff to their welfare. Students respond very well to praise and rewards from the school for their efforts in learning, good attendance and excellent behaviour. One student proudly told inspectors, 'my attendance has gone up from 35% to 96.5% so my mum has bought me a first class train ticket as a treat to add to the reward I got from school.' Academic guidance is good and rapidly improving, giving students a good steer as to how to improve their work. Learning mentors make a significant contribution to the school's work by providing additional support, where necessary, across the school. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust and regularly reviewed and health and safety is carefully managed. Current government safeguarding requirements are met. In this safe and very supportive environment students reach challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the school is successfully focused on raising standards and achievement. The governing body, senior leadership team and other managers all play very effective roles in maintaining the highest standards of care. They have developed a scintillating curriculum across the school, which is successfully promoting outstanding personal development. Self-evaluation at all levels reflects rigorous checking and searching analysis. This matches inspection findings closely. Improvement planning is robust and the milestones set are being achieved. Since the school started, actions taken have been well targeted and have an outstanding impact in bringing about sustained school improvement. The school acknowledges that while procedures to check the quality of teaching across the school are effective, a small number of lessons require slightly more pace so that progress is even better. Resources are well used to support learning. These include interactive whiteboards and communication aids in the classroom and facilities such as the swimming pool located on the campus. Good links exist with parents to support the school's work and to promote community cohesion. Parents are strongly supportive of the school as reflected in their written responses to the inspection. The school is taking strong actions to further involve parents in their children's learning, for example, special events and workshops which are organised regularly.

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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	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?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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	

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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and you were all very helpful. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out about Redwood School.

Your school is good with some outstanding features. This is because the teachers and other adults make sure you are happy. The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding. You all have lots of very exciting things to do each day and this helps you to achieve well. It also helps to make sure you are ready to leave school when the time comes. It is great to see that you all get a good number of certificates for your work. You know what you need to do to be healthy and safe. Your behaviour is outstanding and you are becoming extremely good citizens. I was very impressed with the work of the school council and their suggestions to make the school even better. I was also very impressed with the classroom monitors and students who help those in wheelchairs.

The headteacher, staff and governors all work very hard indeed to make sure you all keep learning well. You have good teachers and this is why you all learn such a lot. I have asked teachers to hurry some lessons along a little more so that you can get through more work and make even better progress.

I know that everyone is proud of your achievements. Keep up all your hard work. I send my very best wishes to each and every one of you.