

Rowdeford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126546
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340996
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Roberts
Headteacher	Ingrid Lancaster-Gaye
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and one social care inspector who looked at the residential provision. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed 12 teachers. Meetings were held with governors, staff and students. Students' work, information on their progress, safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires from 62 staff , 100 students and 49 parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of specialist status in raising achievement for students
- the actions taken to raise achievement in English in Years 10 and 11
- the use of assessment in supporting students to make better progress
- the effectiveness of the school's management of challenging behaviour to ensure students access learning and make progress.

Information about the school

All the students have complex learning difficulties. All have communication and interaction difficulties and are deemed to be vulnerable. Many have autistic spectrum disorders. A very small number of students have very challenging behaviour as a result of their special educational needs. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The school achieved specialist schools status for Communication and Interaction in 2008. It has also achieved Healthy Schools award, the Global Schools award (level 2), the Football Association (FA) Charter Mark, Sportsmark 2008 and the Artsmark bronze award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Rowdeford is an outstanding school which ensures that students make excellent progress in their personal and social skills. This, together with the good progress students make academically, means that they are extremely well prepared for life when they leave school. The key to the school's success is excellent leadership at all levels and the hard work and dedication of the staff. At the heart of the school is the students' welfare and well-being, and all staff ensure that students are extremely well looked after. Very strong links with parents, carers and other agencies do much to support students both in their learning and in their personal development.

Students achieve well and benefit from good teaching. Effective action, particularly over the last year, has raised standards, and in mathematics and science progress is outstanding for many students. The impact of specialist status has done much to support the school's work in social and communication skills and literacy and the majority of students make good progress in these areas. The relationships between staff and students are excellent and do much to enhance learning and students' outstanding enjoyment of school. Lessons are often lively and of high quality. The use of assessment to support learning, though, is not consistent. There are occasions when work is not well matched to the individual needs of the students. In these classes, teachers often do not make clear what skills students will gain during the lesson.

Students' excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles and their obvious enjoyment and pride in participating in a range of sporting and creative activities does much to support their personal and social skills. They show considerable care for each other and work very well together. As a result, behaviour in and around the school is excellent and the school is a calm, well-ordered environment. The range of special needs of students is changing and the school now has a very small number of students with challenging behaviour. Systems to support these young people have improved recently but planning to help them, and staff, manage their behaviour lacks sufficient detail and is not always effective in supporting individuals.

The strong teamwork that permeates the school is very evident within the leadership team. There is an excellent understanding of the areas for improvement and clear planning to ensure that these are addressed. The school's successful track record is reflected in the very good progress it has made since the last inspection and the range of awards it has achieved. This is very likely to continue because leaders remain ambitious and, together with a very good governing body, know how the school can become even more effective. These factors, together with the clear commitment of all staff to ensure that students receive the best possible education, confirm that there is excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers make clear what skills they wish students to learn each lesson and set work that is matched to the range of ability in each class.
- Improve planning for the very small number of students with challenging behaviour so that staff have a better understanding of how to bring about improvements in students' behaviour.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All pupils, including those with particularly complex needs, make good progress in their learning and achieve well. There is no evidence of any group of students achieving less well than their peers. Their achievements have improved over time and more so in the last year. This is very evident for students in Years 10 and 11. The number of students attaining higher results in Entry Level courses is good and better than in the past. The rate of progress across the school has increased and as a result, students' achievements in mathematics and science are excellent. Reading and spelling skills have improved since last year, with the majority of students making good progress. Students have good opportunities to communicate in lessons and are good listeners. As a result, the vast majority make good progress in their communication skills. Improvements in analysing data about progress are enabling the school to become sharper at identifying the small number of students who do not make the progress they should and to take swift action to address this.

Students settle quickly to work and are keen and enthusiastic learners. This was very evident in a Year 7 mathematics lesson where students showed excellent recall of previous work. They participated with much enjoyment in a game in which they made very good use of their numeracy skills to think about the number of the card to assess the likelihood of the next one being higher or lower. Across the school students make very good use of their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, for example when using the internet to price items needed for a beach holiday. Students are very supportive of each other, such as in a Year 10 English lesson when one student helped another with the spelling of a word. They are supportive, too, in reminding each other of how to behave and were often heard reminding a friend not to shout out or to calm down. They have a very good awareness of how to keep safe and say that they know who to go to if they have a problem. Students do not feel there is any bullying in school and feel that everyone behaves well. They clearly enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. The attendance of a small number of students is affected by ill health. The school council plays an important part in raising students' concerns and is very involved in bringing about improvements. They have carried out surveys, for example, about favourite foods and are very positive about the healthy foods they are offered at lunch and break times. Students willingly take on responsibilities and are proud of their different roles. Their involvement in the local community is extensive, visiting for example the old people's home. Their awareness of the plight of others around the world is reflected in the good work they do in raising

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money for different charities and the links they are beginning to develop with schools abroad.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Good and, on occasions, outstanding teaching ensures that students make the progress they should. Routines are well established and all classroom staff are clear about their roles. Behaviour in lessons is usually managed very well and there are good examples of staff supporting the very few students who were struggling to become engaged with their learning. A skill of all teachers is their excellent use of questioning, encouraging students to share their knowledge and checking that new ideas have been understood. Several excellent lessons were observed and a common characteristic was the way teachers ensured that students knew what skills they would learn during the lesson. Teachers made good use of their knowledge of students' abilities to put them into

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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groups. This enables teachers to match the work to the different abilities in the class and ensure that the support staff are used effectively. This good practice is not consistent across the school. On occasions, the learning objectives were about the tasks students would do and sometimes the work was the same for all, regardless of the students' abilities.

Students' delight in going to school is because they say how much they enjoy all the different activities. The curriculum is excellent overall and does much to support students' personal development. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the range of experiences is wide and cross-curricular links are effective. Opportunities for work experience in Years 10 and 11 are excellent and students are very well prepared for moving on to college. The range of extra-curricular activities is very broad and much valued by the students.

The care, guidance and support students receive are excellent. The use of multi-agency professionals and regular meetings between staff and parents and carers ensure that any concerns about students are identified and addressed quickly. Individual education plans are of good quality and targets are monitored regularly. Behaviour is managed very well because of the excellent relationships that exist throughout the school. However, planning for the very small number of students exhibiting challenging behaviour is not always detailed enough to ensure that triggers which cause problems for the students are tracked effectively to avoid incidents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Very effective leadership has been instrumental in driving forward developments and in managing change. Recent changes to management have given more staff opportunities to take on new roles and this they have done with enthusiasm and commitment. The senior leadership team is clear about what needs to be done to improve. Key to this has been the much improved processes for gathering and analysing data which are ensuring that all students have equality of opportunity. The school now has a very good knowledge of the areas for improvement in subjects and year groups. Where individual students are causing concern this is discussed with staff. The school is in the process of refining its systems further to formalise the tracking of individuals and providing a clearer overview for all staff. The governing body is extremely well led. Through regular visits to the school and very challenging questions, governors have an excellent understanding of how well the school is doing. They have been very proactive in using

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the school's fund raising to establish and improve new buildings. Governors are particularly vigilant about safeguarding arrangements and at the time of the inspection these were exemplary. They monitor progress well through detailed reports and are constantly ensuring that any form of discrimination is addressed.

The school has very good arrangements to support students' transition to Rowdeford and when they leave. This is because staff have established very good links with local schools and colleges. Community cohesion is good and is a focus for further development by the school. The school's involvement with the local community is extensive and plans are in place to develop more effective links nationally and globally. The school's good planning to incorporate global awareness within the curriculum is recognised through its Global Award.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parental and carers were overwhelming in their support of the school. Their views are summarised by the comments of two parents: 'My son is extremely well supported by a team of dedicated staff, both academically and emotionally' and 'Rowdeford has given so much to my child and my family. It has made my child what he is today: independent, confident and much more.' A very small number of parents raised individual concerns and these were passed on to the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rowdeford School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	61	15	31	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	76	11	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	59	18	37	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	57	20	41	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	73	12	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	61	16	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	63	15	31	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	61	17	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	78	10	20	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	65	15	31	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	65	15	31	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	34	69	13	27	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	73	12	24	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Rowdeford School, Rowde, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing how hard you work. We found that yours is an excellent school. You work very hard in lessons and do well in your learning. It was good to see how happy you are in school and that you feel safe. The school is very good at making sure you are well cared for. We were pleased that you like keeping healthy and it was good to hear about all the different activities you are involved in. Your teachers know you very well and help you learn a lot of things.

We have asked the school to do two things to make it even better. We have asked that teachers make sure you know what you will be learning in lessons and that the work set is at the right level for each of you. We have also asked that staff have better plans to help them work with the few of you who find it very difficult to settle in school. You can help by continuing to support each other and making sure you are clear about what you will be learning in each lesson.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall

Lead inspector

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