

# Inspection of The Rowan School

Roseville House, Tunnel Street, Bilston WV14 9JW

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Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school has improved a great deal since the last inspection. The new headteacher has brought about rapid positive change. She expects the best for her pupils. Staff share her vision.

The school is a happy, caring place where pupils enjoy learning and teachers are proud to work. Pupils like coming to school because they feel safe and looked after. They say school is 'fun' and 'kind'. Teachers know pupils well. Pupils are nurtured to make sure they feel settled and ready to learn.

Leaders are ambitious for all. Since the last inspection the curriculum has improved. Pupils study a range of subjects. They are expected to work hard. There is a focus on developing basic skills and remembering what has been taught. This helps pupils to become resilient learners.

There are high expectations of behaviour. Most children behave consistently well. They listen well to instructions and other people's ideas. The school does not accept any form of bullying. Rare incidents of 'falling out' are dealt with immediately. Pupils generally get along well together.

The school has recently moved to new premises. Pupils have adapted well to the change. There is a sense of ownership and belonging in the school.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The leadership of the school has improved since the last inspection. The new headteacher has a clear vision – pupils deserve the best chances – and high expectations. This is shared and understood by all staff. Leaders strive to make sure pupils have enjoyable experiences at school. Many pupils arrive at the school with gaps in their learning. Teachers are aspirational for all pupils. They want all pupils to succeed and access age-appropriate learning.

Since the last inspection, leaders have reviewed the curriculum. In subjects including English, mathematics and humanities, the curriculum is sequenced well. Pupils achieve well in these subjects because new learning is based on their existing knowledge. This means pupils achieve well because learning builds on what they know and can already do. Most teachers plan their subjects well and identify what pupils need to learn. In mathematics, pupils learn how to solve problems. They learn to apply different methods to their work and know how to check for mistakes. They are keen to get things right and are proud of their achievements.

Some areas of the curriculum are not quite as well developed as others. The curriculum for art and music, for example, are not as well planned. This means that learning in these subjects does not build on what pupils already know.

Pupils arrive as reluctant readers. Staff teach pupils to use phonics, and for most

this is successful. Not all pupils grasp letter sounds and some require additional support. Teachers identify these pupils quickly and make sure they have opportunities to practise their skills. Teachers read to pupils every day. They choose books that support children's topic work. Pupils enjoy this experience. They listen intently and can talk about the story and make valid predictions about what might happen next.

In literacy lessons pupils do well and make progress. They learn to write in full sentences and make their writing more interesting by using sophisticated language and vocabulary. In some subjects other than English, such as physical education and science, pupils are not routinely encouraged to write in full sentences. This does not allow them to practise their skills across the curriculum.

Leaders make sure pupils have access to a broad range of meaningful experiences. The curriculum is brought to life with lots of exciting visits. In key stage 2 history, pupils visit Bishops Wood to learn about the Stone Age. Those that are learning about the Hindu faith enjoy visiting local temples. Pupils talk about these experiences with enthusiasm. This is important as many of the pupils struggle to interact socially and have previously missed out on opportunities to widen their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

All the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school's work to meet the SEND needs of pupils is effective. Leaders have a good understanding of pupils' needs and make sure teachers are aware of strategies to support their learning. This means that children benefit from the help they need and make progress towards their personal, social and emotional targets.

The school is nurturing and provides excellent pastoral support. The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is well planned. Pupils learn how to be healthy. They know about kindness and age-appropriate relationships. They respect people who are different to themselves. Pupils say school helps them to make friends.

The proprietors are responsible for governance of the school. Since the last inspection they have rightly focused on making the school safe and making sure it meets health and safety requirements. Risk assessments, including fire risk assessments, are completed and the school site is safe and secure. While the headteacher and school leaders have necessary knowledge and experience, governors need to enhance their knowledge of the curriculum to make sure the leaders are held to account. They do not challenge enough in this area.

Leaders have implemented a suitable accessibility plan and fulfil their obligations under schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010.

Parents hold the school in high regard. One parent captured this by saying 'choosing this school was the best decision we made'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements. It outlines what to do if there are concerns about a child. The school does not have a website: hard copies of the policy are available upon request. The designated safeguarding leads understand their responsibilities. Staff recognise signs of abuse and neglect. They know about female genital mutilation, the 'Prevent' duty and child exploitation. They act quickly if there are concerns about a child's welfare. Leaders' knowledge of risks within the local area is impressive. Children learn how to keep safe. Pupils know about online safety, stranger danger and road safety.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The proprietors and governors have not asked sufficiently challenging questions about the curriculum. This has meant that leaders are not always held fully to account for the quality of education in the school. Proprietors and governors now need to enhance their knowledge of the effectiveness of the curriculum and make sure that they question and challenge leaders more effectively.
- The school's music and art curriculums are not organised so that what pupils know and can do in these subjects is built on progressively. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well in these areas. Leaders need to make sure the learning in these areas is sequenced so that pupils develop their creative skills and a wider appreciation of art and music. This will help pupils to learn and remember more.
- Pupils' writing skills are not developed well in subjects other than English. For example, there is an acceptance of one-word answers in subjects such as science and physical education where literacy is not directly taught. Staff should promote pupils' writing across all subjects. Pupils should have opportunities to improve and apply their writing skills for different purposes and audiences.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144374
<b>DfE registration number</b>	332/6008
<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10119228
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	19
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	4
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mike Searle and Ben Whittall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Snita Verma
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£36,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 679877
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@therowanschool.org">admin@therowanschool.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19–21 June 2018

## Information about this school

- The Rowan School is an independent day school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school offers places for up to 30 pupils. All the pupils have SEND. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school was last inspected in April 2018, when it was judged to be inadequate with several unmet independent school standards. A subsequent monitoring inspection took place in March 2019 and several standards remained unmet. The most recent monitoring visit took place in September 2019. The school met all standards inspected at that time.
- Since the last full inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher and several new teaching and support staff.
- The school has recently moved premises. It is now located in a former residential care home. The building has been refurbished to a high standard and includes a range of learning areas, a sports hall and outdoor play area.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the proprietors, school leaders and teaching staff. We spoke with pupils from all year groups.
- We considered the quality of education. We looked at English, mathematics, humanities and PSHE in more detail. This involved meeting with subject leaders and teachers, scrutinising curriculum plans, looking at pupils' books and talking with pupils about their experiences. We also visited several lessons.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads. We examined the school's safeguarding policy and spoke with a range of staff about their understanding of safeguarding procedures. We considered staff training records. The school's procedures for checking staff's suitability to work with children and the single central record were checked.
- Several key policies were reviewed including those pertinent to the curriculum, behaviour, anti-bullying, attendance and complaints. We met with pupils across all year groups to listen to what pupils thought about their experiences at school.
- We considered a small number of responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's survey for parents.

## Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector      Ofsted Inspector

Janet Satchwell      Ofsted Inspector

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