

The Rowan School

Henne Drive, Bilston WV14 9JW

Inspection dates

19–21 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. Pupils do not receive an acceptable standard of education.
- Leaders have not taken the necessary steps to keep pupils safe. They have not ensured that adequate, preventative measures are in place to minimise the risks from fire.
- Leaders do not have effective systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and check that pupils make good progress.
- The quality of teaching and assessment, over time, is weak. This results in pupils making limited academic progress, including the development of their basic literacy skills.
- Teachers do not provide appropriate learning tasks to challenge the most able pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff implement the curriculum effectively. Consequently, pupils do not develop their skills and knowledge well across many subjects, including personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.
- Leaders have not developed effective plans for school improvement. They do not have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- The headteacher has many responsibilities with almost no leadership support. She does not spend enough time on the school's strategic development.
- Teachers do not make effective use of the information in pupils' education, health and care plans to devise programmes to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs.

The school has the following strengths

- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff work hard to manage pupils' challenging behaviours well. They are skilful at re-engaging pupils in their work.
- The headteacher has gained the full support of staff. Together, they are committed to improving outcomes and providing pupils with a safe, secure learning environment.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The proprietors and leaders should take urgent action to:
 - ensure that all staff, including supply staff, understand the procedures for reporting and recording carefully any safeguarding concerns
 - complete a fire risk assessment and address any identified risks promptly
 - ensure that regular checks are made on the fire safety system and record these accurately in the fire log book
 - implement a system for monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching
 - set clear priorities for improvement, based on careful self-evaluation, which are regularly checked by leaders to determine how successful they are in improving pupils' outcomes and welfare
 - ensure that teachers use agreed schemes of work so pupils experience a curriculum relevant to their needs and make good progress
 - increase leadership capacity, providing time and support for the headteacher to focus on strategic priorities and bring about rapid improvement
 - ensure that practice reflects the school's policies, particularly in relation to health and safety matters, and risk assessments
 - secure accuracy in teachers' assessments of pupils' learning and develop a system for tracking and monitoring pupils' achievements over time.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently of a good quality and enables pupils to achieve well by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what pupils should achieve
 - use assessment information to plan and provide effective sequences of learning that are matched closely to pupils' needs
 - consider the information in pupils' education, health and care plans when devising programmes of work for individual pupils
 - provide sufficiently demanding tasks for the most able pupils that encourage them to apply themselves and think deeply
 - plan and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding about, and respect for, different cultures
 - have access to, and make good use of, a range of high-quality teaching resources to support pupils' learning.
- Implement an effective programme for the teaching of reading to ensure that all pupils become competent readers and read with fluency and understanding.
- Staff should improve pupils' behaviour and reduce the amount of physical restraints by:
 - planning and implementing individualised programmes to help pupils address their specific social, emotional, and mental health needs

- improving the quality of provision for PSHE education so that all pupils are well prepared for their futures.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the school opened in September 2017, it has suffered from significant changes in staffing, including at senior leadership level. This has hampered the school's initial efforts to become established. Proprietors made several permanent appointments in the spring term, including the appointment of a new headteacher. However, many staff are temporary.
- The lack of a stable teaching team has made it difficult to establish expectations and gain any consistency in the quality of teaching. Very recently, staffing has become more settled, which is helping to bring about greater continuity in teachers' practice.
- Proprietors have not ensured that there is sufficient leadership capacity to run the school effectively. The current headteacher has a significant number of responsibilities, with limited support. In addition, the headteacher does not delegate tasks well enough to other staff. This reduces the time available for the headteacher to focus on strategic priorities and lead the school successfully.
- Leaders are not doing enough to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders do not have a clear plan of action to develop teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers and support staff do not receive regular guidance and advice about how to improve their practice. Consequently, weak practice goes unchallenged.
- The curriculum covers a broad range of subjects. However, teachers do not use schemes of work effectively to plan learning that meets the specific needs of pupils. A few curriculum areas, including PSHE education, do not have suitable plans in place to ensure that pupils develop their skills and knowledge progressively.
- The headteacher has not undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of the school's performance. She is unclear about the school's strengths and weaknesses, and therefore does not have a strategic action plan to support school improvement.
- Proprietors have not ensured that the building and premises are fit for purpose. The toilets are in a poor state of repair. There is a smell of damp in one part of the school. The school moved to its new premises a little over a month ago. However, there are still areas requiring refurbishment in order to create a pleasant environment conducive to learning.
- Proprietors and leaders do not have a secure understanding of the independent school standards. The content of school policies often does not reflect practice. For example, the school's health and safety policy mentions specific responsibilities for individuals within the school, although some of these roles do not exist. This means that policies are not implemented properly, which has a negative impact on pupils' safety.
- Proprietors are proactive in supporting the school's development. They make regular visits to the school and play an active role in supporting pupils' needs.
- Proprietors are ambitious for pupils and have a clear view about the school's future direction. They have invested in securing high staff-pupil ratios to provide individualised and small-group support for vulnerable pupils who have previously struggled in mainstream education.

- The headteacher has worked hard to develop links with parents. They value the regular communication, although some would like better information about how their children are progressing academically.
- The headteacher has been successful in galvanising the staff team so they work well together and support one another. Staff are generally very positive about working at the school and recognise how they are working well as a team.

Governance

The school does not have a governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders have not taken the necessary measures to keep pupils safe and promote their well-being. Not all staff are clear about the mechanisms for reporting a concern about a child's welfare or safety. Other aspects of safeguarding related to the school premises are of serious concern. For example, leaders have not ensured that all chemicals, such as cleaning materials, have had the appropriate control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) risk assessments. The school does not have an internet filtering system to help protect pupils while online. Leaders have not established a culture of safeguarding.
- At the start of the inspection, there were many failings related to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Except for one room, there were no fire extinguishers in the building, most fire doors were locked, there was insufficient fire exit signage, and leaders had failed to undertake a fire risk assessment. By the end of the inspection, proprietors and leaders had taken remedial action to address many, but not all, of the failings.
- On request, leaders made available to the inspector a current child protection policy. However, it does not have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance and does not include information for staff on important topics such as peer-on-peer abuse.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils are taught properly about how to keep themselves safe. While some units of work exist related to pupils' personal development, these are not planned effectively and therefore fail to equip pupils with the skills they need to stay safe.
- Proprietors make all necessary pre-employment checks to satisfy themselves that new members of staff are suitable to work with children. The school's single central record is comprehensive and demonstrates that staff recruitment processes are robust.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Over time, teaching fails to ensure that pupils make adequate progress. Teaching does not enable pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding progressively. This is because teachers do not use pupils' prior knowledge and experience to plan and provide effective sequences of learning. Consequently, some pupils find the work too easy, and others find it too hard.
- Teachers' expectations about what pupils can achieve vary widely, and all too often are low. Where teachers have high expectations, they plan and provide suitably challenging

work, capture pupils' attention and enable them to make good progress. Music is one example where pupils achieve well. For example, a group of older pupils worked together to create an effective ostinato related to their seaside topic.

- All pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have an education, health and care plan. However, teachers do not have a good knowledge of the content of these plans, related to pupils' educational objectives. Consequently, teachers do not plan and provide purposeful learning programmes and activities that will meet the specific needs of individual pupils.
- Many pupils struggle with reading and writing. They have significant gaps in their knowledge. Teachers do not address these gaps effectively. Pupils are often not motivated to write because they are not helped to see the purpose of their writing.
- Apart from reading materials, teaching resources are generally in short supply. This means that pupils are not supported well enough to learn. For example, younger pupils solving money problems in mathematics had no access to coins. This hinders their progress.
- Teachers do not maximise time for learning. This is particularly the case in relation to personal, social, health and economic lessons, which are rarely planned well and do not have specific learning outcomes.
- Teachers seldom provide specific feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work and therefore make better gains in their learning. Too often, the focus is on pupils completing a task, rather than on the development of skills.
- Teachers try hard to plan and provide practical-based activities for pupils to help engage them in their learning; this is proving successful. For example, as part of pupils' space topic, they enjoyed creating a model of Sputnik. In an art lesson, pupils created imaginative seascapes using mixed media, including wet felt.
- Teachers provide ample opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. This approach is successful and supports pupils' language communication skills effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements are ineffective. This is detrimental to pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders have not implemented a comprehensive, effective programme for pupils' personal development. Consequently, some pupils' specific social and emotional needs are not being met.
- However, throughout the day, teachers promote other aspects of pupils' broader social development consistently well. For example, during lunchtime, pupils are reminded about using good table manners. Pupils respond well to teachers' guidance.
- Aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are underdeveloped. In particular, the curriculum does not support pupils' cultural understanding and awareness effectively.
- Staff are exceptionally skilled in establishing warm, nurturing relationships with pupils.

This helps pupils to develop trusting relationships with others, feel cared for and safe. Pupils talk positively about developing good friendships at school, something that many found challenging at their previous schools.

- Many pupils have been out of school for lengthy periods of time. Staff work effectively to re-engage pupils with their education and get them working again. Most pupils show increasingly positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils say that they are happy and enjoy coming to school.
- Leaders deal effectively with any bullying issues that arise, which reduces the chance of them recurring.
- The headteacher and other school staff maintain a good dialogue with parents and carers, keeping them informed about each child's behaviour. A few parents say that they are not sufficiently well informed about their children's academic progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils attend The Rowan School primarily because their social, emotional and mental health difficulties hinder their learning. However, teachers do not systematically identify and plan specific approaches to support pupils with managing and improving their behaviour. Very recently, the headteacher introduced a system to monitor pupils' behaviour more closely. This is helping to identify the triggers for individual behaviours, although teachers are not using this information well to inform specific plans.
- Several pupils present very challenging behaviour. Staff usually respond appropriately and manage the behaviour well. However, sometimes a pupil's behaviour escalates, which causes a chain reaction involving other pupils. Staff do not always manage these situations as well and this leads to other pupils feeling anxious because of the behaviour of others.
- Recently, staff have implemented the school's new behaviour system, 'rainbow awards'. Teachers encourage pupils to try their best and reward effort as well as good behaviour. This strategy is working well and having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.
- The majority of pupils attend school regularly. Despite the school's attendance figure being below the national average, in almost all cases, each pupil's attendance is significantly better since joining The Rowan School than at their previous school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Leaders have no current information about end-of-year outcomes as the school only opened in September 2017. Additionally, a significant number of pupils have only been in school since the spring term 2018.
- Pupils complete several baseline assessments on entry to the school, including a standardised reading test. This information is not yet used well by teachers to determine pupils' next steps and plan and provide appropriate programmes of work.
- Leaders have not yet devised an effective assessment system to track and monitor pupils' progress. Therefore, leaders are unable to explain, with any certainty, how well pupils

achieve over time. Leaders do use the national curriculum framework to evaluate pupils' performance.

- Pupils' work shows that they make limited progress from their starting points because teachers do not match work well to meet their individual needs. Too many pupils underachieve considerably.
- Pupils do not develop effective reading skills and are not competent, fluent readers. This is because there is not a systematic approach to the teaching of reading, including phonics.
- Pupils demonstrate increasing levels of engagement with their learning. Staff are skilful in getting pupils to complete tasks set in lessons. This is a significant improvement for many pupils who, prior to joining the school, often refused to complete any work. Pupils recognise this improvement in their own learning behaviours.

School details

Unique reference number	144374
DfE registration number	332/6008
Inspection number	10045270

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

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Michael Searle and Ben Whittall
Headteacher	Veronica Fenlon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,000
Telephone number	07456 736542
Email address	vfenlon@therowanschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This was the school's first standard inspection since the school was registered by the Department for Education on 22 June 2017. The school opened in September 2017.
- The Rowan School occupies part of a former secondary school site in Coseley, near Bilston in the West Midlands. It moved to these premises in May 2018. Prior to this, the school was situated in church premises in Coseley.
- The current headteacher joined the school in a supply capacity in November 2017 and was appointed permanently in February 2018.
- Two proprietors have joint ownership of the school. They play an active role in developing the school's provision.
- Local authorities place pupils at the school. All pupils who attend the school have SEN and/or disabilities, and have an education, health and care plan.

- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs, autistic spectrum disorders and associated learning difficulties. The school is registered for 20 pupils. There are currently 18 pupils on roll.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classrooms. Several of the observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. The quality of pupils' work was scrutinised.
- The inspector held meetings with the school's headteacher, the proprietors and staff.
- The inspector considered three free-text comments from Parent View and held three telephone conversations with parents.
- The inspector considered nine responses received from the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including policies, safeguarding documentation, behaviour incident records and attendance information.
- The inspector met with several pupils individually to listen to their views about the school and their learning.

Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work—
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are—
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which—
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school—
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor—
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which—
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;

- 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33(c) sets out clear time scales for the management of a complaint;
- 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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