

Inspection of Rowan House School

207/209 Weston Road, Weston Coyney, Stoke On Trent ST3 6AT

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and all staff have created a special place. Pupils are looked after, safe and valued. The school is warm and welcoming. Relationships between pupils and adults are positive. Pupils who have not attended other schools for a considerable time come to school almost every day. They say that school is 'awesome!'.

Staff are aspirational. They want pupils to do well. The curriculum is ambitious with a high focus on developing basic skills in writing, reading and mathematics. These subjects are carefully planned and taught well. This means that pupils make gains in their learning over time. In a few areas of the curriculum that are not as well established, pupils do not learn and remember as much as they could.

Pupils generally behave well, though, on occasion, low-level disruption does affect learning. Pupils say that school helps them to make friends. Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils say there is always someone to talk to if they feel worried or upset.

Alongside taught lessons, pupils gain valuable experiences outside of the classroom that support their social development. The curriculum is enriched with educational trips and visits to the local community. These opportunities help to prepare pupils for their next steps.

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

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and many have experienced disruption to their previous education. This means that pupils often have gaps in their learning. Leaders have constructed an ambitious curriculum with the emphasis on pupils improving basic skills in English, reading and mathematics during this short time. Teachers understand pupils' needs and make sure that learning is adapted well so that it is accessible. They have considered important content that pupils will need to know in order to successfully transition into their next placement.

In English and mathematics, teachers have carefully thought about what they need to teach and the order they need to teach it. This ensures that new learning builds on what pupils already know. In English, this means that pupils' growing confidence in the use of grammar and vocabulary helps them to develop their written skills over time. Teachers engage pupils in reading well. They identify books of interest and make sure there are regular opportunities to read. Staff are trained in phonics and use this expertise to help pupils to develop their skills. Similarly, in mathematics, pupils develop confidence through regular revision. Their reasoning skills improve and they are able to solve problems by recalling earlier learning. A few areas of the curriculum are less developed. While pupils learn about and can recall basic facts, they are not covering key content in sufficient depth. This limits what they are able to learn and remember.

The school environment is happy and calm. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend almost every day. This is significant as many pupils have not engaged in consistent education before joining the school. Incidents of bullying are rare. Naturally, given their needs, there are times when pupils display challenging behaviour. This is largely well managed by staff who know the pupils well. They are able to provide appropriate strategies to support pupils. This often means that pupils are able to return to learning quickly. On occasion, low-level disruption does impact on the learning of others.

The curriculum for personal, social, and health education takes into account the needs of pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils learn about healthy and safe relationships, mental and physical health and online safety. Pupils are active members of the community. They visit residential homes for the elderly and engage in activities to support charity. The clear focus on readiness for next phases means that pupils learn about career options. They are well prepared for transition into their next placements.

The proprietor has sharp oversight of the school on all aspects of the school's performance. Regular checks on compliance ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met. Parents and carers are well informed on their child's progress. Regular communication supports pupils' learning and engagement.

There are processes in place, outlined through a clear accessibility plan, ensuring that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- A few areas of the curriculum are not as well established as others. This means that pupils do not learn a broad range of important content. The school needs to make sure that pupils are able to study in sufficient depth across the curriculum so that they learn and remember more over time.
- On occasion the behaviour of pupils affects the learning of others. This means that some pupils are not able to learn as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that there are strategies in place to make sure that if pupils are experiencing difficulties, other pupils are still able to learn.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 147985 |
| DfE registration number | 861/6023 |
| Local authority | Stoke-on-Trent |
| Inspection number | 10310187 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 14 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Halliwell Homes |
| Chair | Mathew Hargreaves |
| Headteacher | Jennifer Illsley |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £48,750 |
| Telephone number | 01782 757583 |
| Website | https://halliwellhomes.co.uk/rowan-house-school/ |
| Email address | jenny.illsley@halliwellhomes.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 29 June to 1 July 2021 |

Information about this school

- Rowan House School is a small, independent day school located in Stoke-on-Trent. The school offers places to pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- Pupils are on roll at the school for a limited time. The school aims for pupils to return to mainstream education or appropriate alternative setting within 18 months.

Information about this inspection

The inspector 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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgment about the quality of a school's education provision.

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher and the head of school. A meeting was also held with the proprietor, who is also the chair of governors.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: English, mathematics, computing and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a number of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour, health and safety, complaints and admissions. A tour of the premises was also conducted to check for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

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