

# Rowdeford School

Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ

**Inspection dates** 27–28 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of students		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of students		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and students

### This is an outstanding school

- All groups of students make rapid progress, often from very low starting points, in all aspects of their learning across the school.
- Teaching is outstanding over time with consistent, day-to-day examples of lessons where students' learning is outstanding. Very occasionally students are over-directed by staff.
- All staff work very effectively together and support staff make a strong contribution to lessons. This ensures that all students join in fully and make outstanding progress.
- A very high proportion of students are eligible for the government funding known as pupil premium and these students make excellent progress because of timely and carefully targeted support.
- The excellent curriculum is individual to each student and exciting. The curriculum very effectively promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by offering a wide range of carefully planned experiences both in and outside school.
- The focus since the previous inspection in using the huge school grounds for outdoor activities and Eco-learning has been inspirational for many students.
- Students are extremely well cared for. They feel secure and appreciated as individuals. Students' behaviour improves from the day they start.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are highly effective in rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching to ensure their aims are achieved and are very effective in developing the skills of the staff and supporting them to take on additional responsibilities.
- Members of the governing body know the school very well and provide consistent support and challenge to drive improvement.
- The outstanding work of the Charitable Trust has led to continuing major improvements to the school buildings and grounds.
- The local authority gives the school good support. The school makes very effective use of its outstanding consultancy service to help other schools.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The very effective contribution made by the Friends of the School Association is much appreciated by all concerned.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons taught by 14 different teachers. Five of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with groups of students. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, others with posts of responsibility, and members of the governing body, members of the board of the school’s charitable trust and members of the Friends of Rowdeford.
- The lead inspector also held a conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector took account of 34 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school’s own parental questionnaire returns, and 40 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school’s practice and looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s checks on how well it is doing and improvement planning, information on students’ progress, documents used by senior leaders to check the school’s work, the school’s performance management systems, governing body documentation, as well as records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

David Marshall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ian McAllister

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Rowdeford is an average-sized special school. The school caters for students with complex learning difficulties. All have communication and interaction difficulties. A significant number have autism spectrum disorders.
- All students enter school with a statement of special educational needs, with an increasing proportion having sensory and physical disabilities along with more complex learning needs.
- Most students are from families of White British heritage.
- Students are drawn from the whole of Wiltshire and the school offers a residential facility for up to 23 students.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well above average. This is government funding that the school receives for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are in local authority care and the children of military personnel.

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

- Enable all students to make consistently outstanding progress in all lessons by ensuring they are not occasionally over-directed, and supporting teachers to share the best practice always apparent in some subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of students

### is outstanding

- Students join Rowdeford with attainment that is well below expected levels. Many have additional learning difficulties or have missed parts of their education through illness. School records show that most have weak communication and numeracy skills. By the time they leave school they make outstanding progress. All of them achieve basic qualifications in literacy and numeracy.
- Students who remain at the school from Year 7 to Year 11 and those who are residential make consistently outstanding progress because they form very strong relationships with staff and get intensive support over time.
- Teachers are especially skilful in motivating students to take qualifications in Year 11. Each student has a carefully planned programme that matches their needs and increasing numbers of them gain a range of qualifications. In 2013 all students in Year 11 left the school with eight or more academic and vocational qualifications. Combinations of work experience and college placements ensure that students are very well prepared for their next stage.
- In lessons, there is rightly a strong, successful emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics. All teachers use precise vocabulary which helps students learn and use words that are linked to the topic being studied. For example, in a Year 11 horticulture lesson, it was amazing to hear students talking about nutrients in the soil. When cooking the produce they have grown for themselves, students become increasingly confident in speaking and writing about ingredients, textures, colours and tastes and make outstanding progress.
- Students make outstanding progress in mathematics over time. This is because teachers' high expectations, subject knowledge and enthusiasm motivate the students to do well.
- The school promotes equal opportunities exceptionally well. All groups of students, including those who receive pupil premium funding, make the same excellent progress. The school has used this pupil premium funding to provide outdoor education and to support individual interventions and further therapy sessions. The boost this gives to their confidence means that, for many students, the success they experience leads to greater engagement with learning in all lessons.
- School records show that parents think that their child is achieving well and students agree. As one said, 'I have learnt so much more since coming here'.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Teaching over time across the school is outstanding. A clear whole-school approach to making sure that all students participate in learning is very effective. Teachers make use of a range of strategies to engage all students actively in lessons. An outstanding design and technology lesson where Year 7 students designed, assembled and flew their balsawood planes covered almost all aspects of the curriculum and was enjoyed by all involved.
- Teachers skilfully adapt their lessons in response to students' responses and reinforce learning through the use of praise to enhance their knowledge and understanding. Very occasionally the teachers over direct students and fail to give time to pick up on all students' responses.
- Teachers' planning is detailed and focuses on helping all students to succeed whatever their level of need. Teachers carefully match tasks to the needs of individuals, and as a result students make secure and sustained progress over time. In all lessons, the teachers provide tasks that are progressively more challenging and enable students to continue to progress through their careful monitoring of the students' learning each day.
- Additional support staff are deployed very effectively and make excellent contributions to supporting students' progress, using carefully targeted questioning and regularly checking their understanding. On a very few occasions the teaching assistants' fervour to enable students to finish their tasks means they give too much direct help and the students gain less than from completing the task for themselves.
- The assessments which take place across all subjects every half-term provide excellent

opportunities to accurately identify students' progress. Students and teachers are very clear about whether or not this progress is fast enough and what to do to if it is not.

- Teachers' excellent knowledge of each student and enthusiasm to help students make the best possible progress provides a highly motivating learning environment. They are dedicated to providing the best educational experience for the students and give very generously of their time. The way that two students with severe communication difficulties have learned to play their favourite melodies on the piano, through the commitment of a teaching assistant, was inspiring. Students and their parents value this degree of dedication highly.

### **The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding**

- The students, many with a history of challenging behaviour and failure in previous schools, quickly settle to the relaxed and caring atmosphere of Rowdeford.
- Students' behaviour in and out of lessons is almost always impeccable; relationships between students and between students and staff are supportive and respectful. Through the school's consistent use of their 'Core Values' document students develop a clear understanding of how their behaviour contributes to their own success and to the well-being of others. They have an outstanding attitude towards their school and to their learning and this underpins their rapid progress.
- Parents and the students are unreservedly positive about behaviour. They report that bullying is almost unknown, confirmed by the school's records. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying, of any kind, during the previous year. Parents, staff and students are consistently positive about the harmonious and supportive ethos found at the school.
- Students report that they feel safe. They have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe through well-structured personal, social and health education lessons and through the constant presence of staff who are always available to advise and counsel and who provide excellent role models.
- In discussion students report that they enjoy coming to school, often for the first time in their history. This is demonstrated in their calm behaviour, excellent manners and in the generally good attendance of the great majority of students.
- The staff manage behaviour exceptionally well. Students report that they feel relaxed and understand that staff are working very hard on their behalf. Teachers maintain extremely detailed lesson-by-lesson records of students' behaviour and attitudes and these are closely monitored on a daily basis. Where there is any slight deterioration, a variety of remedial methods are employed, from discussion with the student to changing groups and times of lessons. Teachers' detailed records show convincingly that standards of behaviour have been maintained at a very high level since the previous inspection and continue to improve.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The school's leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education noted at the time of their previous inspection. The drive to continually improve outcomes for every student and to make sure that everyone has the chance to succeed is at the heart of the school's developments. Teamwork is excellent and everyone, including the administrative team and caretaking staff, are considerable assets to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned. As one staff member wrote, 'Rowdeford is a school to be proud of and working here is a joy.'
- The very experienced headteacher and management team attach great importance to staff training and support this by regular observation of teaching, and by setting demanding targets for individual staff to improve their work. The high level of professional support for all staff is linked closely to setting performance targets that hold teachers accountable for students' progress very well. Outstanding teaching is rewarded accordingly.
- The local authority provides effective support, through an experienced school evaluation partner, who provides very helpful guidance to the teachers across a range of issues and outcomes. The

school uses its independent expert outreach help to other schools, offered through the Rowdeford Consultancy Service, which is of enormous benefit both to others and the school itself.

- The school fosters and maintains very strong links with a wide range of partners. The strong links with the local community ensure that there are very good learning opportunities for those students who are ready for a more adult learning experience or for an added focus on vocational activities. The thrill reported by one student that helping in Sainsbury's had offered him was a joy to witness. He was happy to report that they had 'raised over two over hundred pounds as well!'
  - The leadership team skilfully weaves together academic, personal and therapeutic aspects so that the curriculum meets the individual needs, aspirations and interests of each student. The curriculum supports students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development exceptionally well through creative activities such as music groups, the choir and drama activities and through the outstanding use of the school grounds. The large-scale Second World War re-enactment staged with the Year 9 students observed on the inspection must have taken hours to set up in the grounds. The degree of involvement by the students and the amount they learned made it more than worthwhile.
  - Parents are regarded as key partners in the joint endeavour to fulfil students' potential. There are excellent channels of communication through students' school diaries, emails, forums, and meetings with staff. All parents interviewed and those who responded online were very positive about their level of engagement with the school.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body knows the strengths and development areas of the school very well through governors' regular visits to classes in the school. It has a good knowledge of data that compare the school to schools nationally. It uses this information to robustly hold senior leaders to account.
    - The spending of the pupil premium and the difference it is making is closely monitored. For example, governors know that the school very successfully closes the gap between students known to be eligible for free school meals and all students nationally.
    - The governing body has good systems to monitor the performance of staff and ensure that any salary increases are very clearly linked to teacher performance. Governors undertake regular professional training through the local authority. The governing body ensures that the school's safeguarding policies are very thorough, reviewed regularly, and that all procedures are robust and secure and staff are fully trained.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	126546
<b>Local authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	403810

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	130
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Midgley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ingrid Sidmouth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01380 850309
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