



# Rowdeford School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 126546  
**Local Authority** Wiltshire  
**Inspection number** 293583  
**Inspection date** 29 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mike Kell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Rowde
<b>School category</b>	Community		Devizes
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		SN10 2QQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01380 850309
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	122	<b>Fax number</b>	01380 850708
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Barbara Roberts
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Ingrid Lancaster-Gaye
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 March 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Rowdeford School caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, complex learning needs, and autistic spectrum disorders, all of whom have a statement of special educational need. It offers residential accommodation for up to 24 boarders. The pupil roll has grown by one third since the last inspection as the school has opened a new unit, the Prospect Centre. This accepts up to 30 pupils with autism. Boys outnumber girls by two to one, although equal numbers of boys and girls are boarders. Almost every pupil has a White British background and virtually all of them speak English as their first language. In recent years the school has been required to admit some pupils with more challenging behaviour.

There have been significant changes in the leadership and management of the school in the last three years. Serious staffing problems had an adverse effect on the school's ability to manage itself to such an extent that early in 2005 it successfully requested additional financial and management support from the local authority. The current senior management team has only been in post since September 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents are virtually unanimous in their views of the school. They make comments such as 'the staff are incredibly supportive to us as a family' and 'teachers and helpers work very hard to help all children'. The pupils love being there. The positive views of parents and pupils are fully justified. Rowdeford is a good school. The residential provision makes an important contribution to enhancing pupils' learning and promoting their personal development. The work that the school does reflects successfully its motto of Living and Learning Together. The strong position in which the school now finds itself is as a result of good leadership and management. Senior staff and governors pulled the school through the difficulties it faced 18 months ago in the aftermath of senior staff illnesses and resignations and they are now determining the nature and direction of further developments. The effectiveness with which the school formulates its improvement planning is generally good but there are too many objectives for staff to take on board at once. Effective leadership and management has also ensured that the school has made the appropriate changes required to meet the needs of a changing population as pupils with autism and others with more extreme and challenging behaviour have been admitted.

Although standards are well below national expectations, pupils, including those with autism, make good progress from their starting points when they arrive in school. Their achievements are good because they receive a high quality education. Pupils are taught well by organised and knowledgeable teachers and they follow a good curriculum that is well planned. For example, the curriculum provided for pupils with autism is very sensitive to their particular needs. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has recently gone through a period of change and it now looks good. The school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and well cared for. The good systems and procedures in place give pupils high levels of care, guidance and support.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Day and residential staff offer especially high levels of support through their day-to-day interactions to help pupils to develop as young people. They strive to help pupils to develop their independence and self-esteem and take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well informally, but it is not well planned for in every lesson. The guidance pupils receive about how to improve the standard of their work is less effective because features of assessment procedures are not sufficiently robust. For instance, the procedures for involving other colleagues to confirm the accuracy of an individual teacher's assessments are at a very early stage.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspections last visited the school in June 2006. They concluded that the school provided a high level of care. Inspectors agree with this judgement. The school's communication with pupils and their families

and the support for individual children were judged as being particularly good. There were no recommendations for further development. Residential child care staff contribute to pupils' personal development in many ways, such as ensuring the consistent implementation of health and behaviour plans and encouraging the development of life skills such as independence. They support the work pupils do in class through activities such as listening to them read. Pupils' experiences are also extended and enriched well such as by staff encouraging them to go into the local community and join in activities such as the local youth club.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Implement systems for ensuring accuracy and consistency in all teachers' assessments of pupils' attainments.
- Introduce procedures for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a formal and planned way.
- Produce school improvement planning that contains only the most critically important priorities and identifies precise criteria for measuring success.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school are well below national expectations. By the time they leave levels of attainment are still well below the national average, but overall the pupils make good progress in relation to their complex learning needs. Pupils in Key Stage 3 achieve well consistently and make good progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills. A major reason for pupils' good progress is the school's early focus on managing their behaviour and promoting positive attitudes. Teaching arrangements also make an important contribution to pupils' good achievements, as pupils are gradually introduced to specialist subject teaching. Pupils with autism achieve well as qualified staff ensure that the curriculum is geared to these pupils' specific needs and they are taught skilfully.

In the recent past the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 4 has been satisfactory rather than good, although they have achieved consistently well in science. Further progress was hampered by staffing difficulties and limitations in the curriculum. Pupils' achievements are improving as a result of recent initiatives and they are now good. Pupils are well prepared for leaving school. They make good progress towards achieving their targets and in developing literacy and numeracy skills. They also become increasingly skilled in making the right choices and decisions. Work-related learning and pupils' success in accredited examinations, including a number of top grades in virtually all the subjects that they take at Entry Level, support the transition from school well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The impact of the work the staff does in promoting pupils' personal development is evident in pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, good attendance and good behaviour. Pupils say that they enjoy school very much. A very recent school questionnaire showed every single pupil felt happy at school. As a result, they approach their learning positively and enthusiastically. They behave very well in lessons, but they are not always as good in less structured situations, such as break time. On those few occasions when individual pupils do become restless or disruptive, other pupils support teachers in resolving this. As one young pupil said in response to a classmate who kept calling out, 'Stop it. You're wasting our science lesson'.

Pupils feel safe in school. Staff work hard and successfully in building up relationships and so pupils have the confidence to approach an adult if they have a problem or concern. They know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and participate keenly in sporting activities and play energetically, and at times boisterously, during breaks. Many are now making healthy choices independently at lunchtime. Pupils have good opportunities to help within their own community. The school council is very active and it has made suggestions that have been taken up by the school, such as the establishment of a quiet area. Membership of the school council also gives pupils some insight into leaving school and preparing for work, as the council has its own budget that it has to manage.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's ethos does this very effectively informally. The school is less effective in supplementing and encouraging these aspects of personal development more systematically through lesson planning and it does not yet attempt to measure how successful it is in doing this.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons are productive and interesting and consequently pupils learn well. Teachers know their pupils very well and lessons are well planned, structured and organised. Teaching assistants are effective in focusing pupils' attention and encouraging their participation. Pupils are generally managed securely, although occasionally this does take up teachers' time. Pupils with autism are managed particularly skilfully and so there is minimal disruption to lessons. Assessment procedures need further development. Individual teachers are often too isolated in assessing the 'P' and National Curriculum levels at which pupils are working. As a consequence, they are not always fully confident that they are helping pupils to improve their work in the most effective ways.

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## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school ensures that all statutory requirements are met. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a good curriculum. The way it is taught, with pupils slowly progressing from a class-based delivery to a specialist teacher approach, is an especially important factor in their good achievements. Relatively recently, the school recognised that the Key Stage 4 curriculum needed further development. It was satisfactory but relatively narrow and lacking inspiration. Appropriate action has now been taken to improve it, but it is too early to evaluate fully the impact these changes have had. Pupils follow a good range of courses, all of which are now externally accredited. Options have been introduced for the first time this year and the school has begun to improve the vocational element of the curriculum. This is being supported well by developing links with other schools and colleges.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are looked after very well. They live and work in a safe and caring environment. All staff go through the appropriate vetting process with the Criminal Records Bureau and there are effective child protection procedures. School-based and residential unit staff provide consistently high levels of support and guidance, particularly in respect of pupils' personal development. This gives pupils the confidence and self-esteem to approach their learning positively. The quality of guidance given to pupils in terms of their academic progress is not so consistent. Work is generally marked and frequently annotated in ways that show pupils how they can improve. Individual education plans are satisfactory as a means of measuring pupils' progress towards their individual targets. On a few occasions targets are not linked tightly enough to individual learning needs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

In view of the very turbulent period that the school has experienced since the last inspection, senior managers have done a good job in getting the school to its current position. The headteacher, supported by a highly effective chair of governors, has been particularly influential in this respect. Firstly they maintained stability and worked on developing teamwork. More recently, as other senior staff have been appointed and taken on responsibilities, the newly established senior leadership team is beginning to focus on strategic developments. This team has a good capacity to bring about further improvement. Rigorous evaluations of classroom practice have resulted in consistently good teaching and an improving Key Stage 4 curriculum. The school is now ready for the next steps. Although generally good, school improvement planning lacks real sharpness, with the criteria for determining the school's success in achieving its targets sometimes too imprecise.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We enjoyed our visit to your school very much. Thank you for helping to make us feel so welcome. We agree with you. Rowdeford is a good school. Those of you who board benefit a great deal from the time you spend in the residential units.

Lessons are good and so you learn and achieve well. In Years 7 to 9 you study a good variety of subjects. This used not to be the case in Years 10 and 11 but the situation is now much better. The school has made some important improvements, such as giving you options to follow and making useful links with other schools. The future looks exciting. Staff look after you very well. They work very hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for.

We were pleased to see that most of you attend school regularly. This is important if you want to do well in your examinations. We were very impressed with the way you enjoy your lessons and how well most of you behave in class, although a few of you do sometimes disrupt lessons. You can help by always following the class rules and behaving just as sensibly when there are no adults around. All staff try very hard to help you to become more mature and to get ready for leaving school by encouraging you to become more confident and independent and to make sensible choices.

Senior staff and governors manage the school well. They have worked extremely hard to make the school better and are very determined to keep improving it. We have given senior staff, teachers and governors some ideas to help them to do this:

- Measure more accurately the exact progress you make in your work.
- Improve the ways in which they help you to develop as young people by better planning to support the good work they already do.
- Write more efficient plans to show how they intend to improve the school.

Thank you again, and we wish you luck in the future.