

Rosewood Free School

Alder Moor Road, Southampton, SO16 5NA

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Learning and achievement are outstanding. Pupils of all ages throughout the school thrive as a result of the school's philosophy that good education is caring and that good care is educational.
- Expert care is seamlessly combined with expert teaching. As a result, pupils make excellent progress.
- Children attending part-time sessions in the Nursery and full-time in Reception make excellent progress. They settle into school well, are prepared for learning and to proceed to the next stage in their education.
- The Hub is an outstanding provision for post-16 students. All students, particularly the most able, make excellent progress by applying what they know and can do to real-life situations. Students improve their social skills and levels of independence.
- The teaching of all groups of pupils is highly expert. Assessments are completed in fine detail and learning planned individually for every pupil as a result.
- A positive atmosphere abounds in school. Pupils demonstrate their sense of happiness and security through smiles, gestures and engagement with activities. Pupils behave very well and attend whenever possible.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide inspirational leadership to other staff. They communicate high expectations with effective support to ensure that teaching continuously improves.
- The school's directors are knowledgeable and skilled in the role of governance. They bring a wealth of relevant experience. They hold school leaders to account and successfully ensure the school's financial viability.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector and headteacher visited six lessons together. The inspector made visits to another two lessons and observed lunchtime arrangements in three classes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, as well as senior leaders with responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage and post-16 provision. Meetings were also held with teaching staff and representatives from the governing body who are directors of the school.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised. These included policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, evidence of monitoring of the quality of teaching and minutes of the governing body. In addition, the school's systems for assessing, tracking and evaluating pupils' progress and individual education plans were examined in detail.
- The inspector took account of the views of 11 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), letters from parents and the 50 questionnaires completed by school staff.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rosewood Free School has undergone a significant period of change and expansion. The school was designated as a free school in September 2012, having formerly been a non-maintained special school owned by the Rose Road Association. The school has remained on the same site, but with extensive expansion to buildings. Pupil numbers have more than doubled, with a further increase in pupil numbers in the next academic year.
- The school offers education to pupils aged two to 19 years with profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities and complex medical needs. Most have additional needs, such as hearing and visual impairment or autistic spectrum disorder. Some have life limiting medical conditions. All have education health and care plans or are in the process of being assessed for an education, health and care plan.
- Since the school has expanded, a small number of students with severe learning difficulties and physical difficulties have been admitted to an additional class in the post-16 provision. The post-16 provision is known as The Hub.
- Pupils are placed in the school by two local authorities.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage, although there are increasing numbers of pupils from different backgrounds, including some who are new to understanding English. There are more boys than girls. Around one in eight pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium. There are currently two looked after pupils in school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the records of governing body meetings in order that they reflect the level of debate, rigour and challenge that takes place.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- As a result of their complex and extensive special needs, pupils' attainment at all stages of their education remains significantly below that of pupils in mainstream and most other special school settings. In relation to their starting points, all pupils, including those in the sixth form, make excellent progress including in cognitive, communication and physical skills.
- School data relating to pupils' levels of attainment and rates and patterns of progress have been gathered over years. As a result, it is possible to make accurate predictions about what each pupil could achieve. Targets are individually set. Progress towards these targets is meticulously recorded and analysed by teachers and monitored by school leaders.
- Observations in classes, pupils' individual records and the data confirm that pupils make consistently outstanding progress in learning over time. Analysis of data shows no significant difference in rates of progress between groups of pupils, including in the sixth form. Boys and girls, those who are looked after, pupils who are new to hearing English and those supported by pupil premium funding progress equally well. The school is therefore promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination highly effectively.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress. This arises from sensitive and extensive transition arrangements that allow children and their families to become familiar with school. Parents and grandparents are welcomed as the experts. They are able to take part in lessons and demonstrate to school staff what their children like and can do.
- Pupils are grouped in classes according their ages and key stages. Classes are taught by one class teacher, with high numbers of learning support and medical staff. Detailed annotations of pupils' responses, for example to the sound of a trombone, are made, to ensure their likes and dislikes are known and that new activities capture their interest and challenge pupils to make progress.
- The school day, for all pupils, follows well-established, consistent routines. Staff ensure that every part of the school day is valued as learning time and no opportunities are wasted. For example, lunchtimes and trips to the bathroom are as vital as any other lessons for promoting communication. This approach helps pupils make better progress than expected. All parents who expressed a view reported that their child had made good progress.
- Pupils' achievement in communication is afforded high priority. Use of technologies, including a range of switches, enable some pupils to clearly communicate a preference. For other pupils, intentional communication is extended through developing eye gaze, vocalisation and body movement.
- The detailed knowledge of pupils and the plans to meet their physical needs result in excellent progress in acquiring physical skills. School sport funding is used to provide additional sporting experiences. Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy form part of daily or regular routines. All staff are skilled in moving and handling pupils and using the wide variety of resource equipment, including soft mats, resonance boards, standing frames and lifting equipment to ensure pupils experience different views of the world and build and maintain physical strength and flexibility.
- In the sixth form, students have plentiful opportunities to undertake work experience activities, to benefit from visiting other schools and to learn and practise essential life skills, such as how to shake hands with a visitor. As a result, students are better prepared for the next stages in their lives.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers and supporting adults work effectively together to enable pupils to make the best progress possible. Adults know the pupil they are supporting well, so understand how to promote engagement in an activity. Each pupil benefits from individual attention for much of the day. Because of the detailed observational notes, every lesson is adjusted to build precisely on

previous learning and to allow next steps to be met.

- The school's multidisciplinary approach to assessment gives a profound insight into each pupil. This leads to meticulous planning of learning, care and support. Specialists, therapists and families contribute to planning. This ensures teaching is relentlessly focused on the right priority for every pupil.
- The determination to make a difference to pupils' learning and communication is reflected in the consistently high quality of teaching found across the school. Personal care, medical and physical needs are all managed as part of the planned day and learning opportunities are maximised.
- Teachers and all adults communicate well and consistently with pupils. Staff focus, sometimes quietly and sometimes more exuberantly, on the pupils they are supporting. Staff employ a range of known techniques, such as reflecting pupils' facial gestures or vocalisations in order to stimulate and increase the range of responses. Pupils respond positively to the varying activities.
- Wherever possible, teachers and adults promote pupils' independence skills and encourage pupils to make choices about their environment. Pupils are provided with interesting experiences, such as sights, smells and sounds. Over time, pupils become increasingly more adept at participating and expressing a view, for example through turning towards a pleasing sound or turning away from a smell they dislike!
- Resources including a sensory room, spacious outdoor areas and control technologies are used successfully to engage and motivate pupils and to help them extend their concentration. For example, in lessons throughout the school, switches are used successfully by pupils in order to listen to a story, play or play music. One post-16 student adeptly used a communication board on a tablet to convey his views about exercise!
- Teaching in The Hub for more able students is lively. There is an air of pace and expectation for what students will achieve and the effort that they will make. Students demonstrated progress in a wide range of physical and social skills when they worked collaboratively to cook a meal. Strong communication with families is maintained.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Understood and consistently applied routines, an evident respect for pupils' dignity, and support for their physical and emotional well-being lead to this exemplary behaviour. Pupils' behaviour indicates that pupils feel safe and happy in school. Pupils are generally calm and cheerful. There are frequent smiles and shouts of excitement or joy.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils contribute towards pupils' positive attitudes to learning and to the effective management of behaviour. This is particularly important as a minority of pupils can display self-injurious behaviours if distressed.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Individual behaviour plans and risk assessments ensure that environmental and behavioural risks are systematically reduced. This ensures that the school's aim of keeping pupils safe and ready and willing to learn is well met.
- Communication cues are always used by staff, with no exceptions, to indicate to a pupil if they are going to be hoisted up or down, taken to the bathroom or moved. The school mantra of 'Every cue, every pupil, every time' is fully embedded. Pupils increasingly understand these and other cues, such as the use of a microphone to signal when they are entering the school hall. As a result, pupils exhibit confidence during transitions from one activity to another.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, particularly as a result of their contact with the transport escorts, the school staff and each other. Attendances rates vary from full attendance to limited attendance due to severe ill health. There is no unauthorised absence from school and no exclusions. Punctuality is very good.
- The oldest students in school benefit from experiencing informal activities at lunchtime in the sixth form common room. This further contributes to developing their readiness for the next steps in their lives.
- Parents and school staff are confident that pupils are safe and happy when at school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are determined, and rightly ambitious, that every possible action should be taken to secure the best education and care for the pupils of Rosewood Free School. They have secured the total commitment of staff and the total confidence of parents. Highly effective working with support and therapy staff, as well as with other schools, colleges and providers of respite care, ensures that best practice is widespread.
- Staff, senior and middle leaders are passionate about pupils' success. Phase leaders and class teachers use latest research as well as training opportunities to enhance their own knowledge. This approach contributes to raising pupils' achievements even further.
- Leaders and teachers are clear about their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Teachers report that senior staff have high expectations of them, but that this is accompanied by equally strong support. Staff morale is high. By sharing assessments and planning together, staff and professionals ensure optimum conditions for the pupils of all ages, including those in the sixth form, to learn and make progress. As a result, no aspect of pupils' needs is overlooked and there is no discrepancy between what different groups of pupils achieve.
- Leaders are relentless in their drive to maintain the school's outstanding reputation and to keep on improving. Lessons are observed regularly and systematically and are linked to teachers' performance management targets and progression on the pay scale. Professionals from outside the school are consulted to assure the headteacher's own judgements about the quality of pupils' learning and the teaching in the school.
- There is a distinct school curriculum divided into five key skill areas, including cognitive skills and communication. It is adjusted for each pupil, as a result of their individual assessment and linked to small, yet identifiable, steps in learning. Progress towards targets is regularly reviewed and targets amended when appropriate. The curriculum is supplemented by enrichment days, such as story telling events and a visit to the Houses of Parliament. A strong contribution is made to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.
- Sixth form students benefit from the extensive guidance and preparation for leaving school, including supported visits to colleges and celebration events. Strong leadership of the post-16 provision and Early Years Foundation Stage is resulting in even more determined and rigorous leadership throughout the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Directors make a strong contribution to the strategic development of the school. They demonstrate an acute understanding of the strength of leadership and teaching and the subsequent impact on pupils' achievements. They are clear about how teachers are supported to improve further and that weak teaching in the past has been successfully tackled. Directors ensure that pay progression, including for the headteacher, is related to performance. Robust dialogue and challenge are features of many meetings; however, this is not well captured in meeting records. Directors bring a wealth of relevant experience to their roles, including financial, medical and educational expertise. They understand school data, are regular visitors to the school and ensure policies and procedures, particularly those related to ensuring pupils' safety, are kept up to date. Directors have undertaken safeguarding training as well as training in safe recruitment processes. Significant and positive changes to the financial management of the school, including the employment of a bursar, have resulted from the work of directors.

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

Unique reference number	139265
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	441928

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

Type of school	Free School
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	Board of directors
Chair	Ann Dyton
Headteacher	Jenny Boyd
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2012
Telephone number	02380 571050
Email address	info@rosewoodfreeschool.org.uk

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