

Roaches School

Tunstall Road, Knypersley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST8 7AB

Inspection dates

3–5 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school provides an exceptionally high standard of education to pupils who previously have had a very varied experience of schools.
- From very low starting points, pupils make outstanding gains in their understanding, knowledge and skills.
- Leadership is outstanding. Leaders have provided a demanding curriculum that is well matched to pupils' needs, and pupils enjoy its challenges.
- Leaders have made sure that the curriculum is combined with strong teaching that ensures that pupils make outstanding progress.
- The proprietor leads the school with vision. He skilfully enables his colleagues to take the initiative and he holds them rigorously to account.
- Staff have the highest expectations for their pupils and themselves. Pupils meet these expectations and sometimes surpass them.
- Pupils are eager to learn. Teachers make learning engaging and interesting. The use of assessment is consistently effective across the school.
- Safeguarding is of the highest standard. It is central to everything the school does.
- The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is impressive. Pupils make remarkable improvements in their behaviour over the time they are at the school.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have not yet done all they can to ensure that parents, carers and families make use of the opportunities the school provides.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the ways in which parents and families are helped to support pupils by:
 - planning and extending the school's therapeutic provision so that its benefits are shared by those who care for pupils beyond the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Exceptional leadership has created an outstanding education for the pupils at this school. Together with staff, leaders have consistently high expectations. They are driven by a commitment to constant improvement. Staff work together very well, reviewing practice and challenging each other to do better. Leaders and managers ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteachers of both of the school's sites work closely with the executive headteacher and, together, they are an inspirational influence in the life of The Roaches School.
- Leaders have developed efficient systems for evaluating their work. The quality of teaching and learning is closely monitored, and helpful feedback is given to staff. Pupils are given a wide range of assessments when they first attend the school so that leaders know their starting points and can securely track their progress. Leaders know the school and its pupils very well and raise standards of achievement in a thoughtful and reflective manner.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have developed secure and ambitious behaviour plans for each pupil. Leaders put in place a wide range of therapeutic and teaching strategies that help pupils to make significant improvements to their behaviour.
- Leaders are eager to make sure that their work is of a high quality. Within their team, they have created a role called quality assurance manager. This role successfully focuses on challenging the impact of other leaders' judgements and planning. As a result, pupils' outcomes are constantly at the heart of leaders' work.
- A therapeutic approach is central to leaders' strategies. Leaders have appointed and trained staff who are very skilled at understanding pupils' special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The school has a highly effective full-time psychotherapist who helps leaders consider the impact of their planning and practice on the lives of pupils.
- Staff work well together with leaders to secure their professional development. Leaders put in place a wide range of training, for example, in safeguarding, literacy, numeracy and behaviour improvement. This has been the key to developing the high quality of teaching and learning. Staff suggest ways in which training could be further improved. Recently, there has been a renewed focus on mathematics and, as a result of this, outcomes in mathematics are rising.
- Staff training and appraisal are led very well by the senior leadership team. Staff have realistic targets to improve pupils' learning and behaviour that are both aspirational and achievable. Leaders and staff plan and manage these targets together, with good humour and straight talking. Although the school is geographically divided, there is a strong shared purpose unifying the school. Staff morale is very high.
- The curriculum is outstanding. Literacy and numeracy are at the heart of the curriculum, which means that pupils succeed in other subjects and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders make sure that all pupils learn through a challenging academic curriculum, which includes, for example, studying two modern foreign

languages: German and Spanish. Pupils are able to study for and enter a wide range of demanding externally validated qualifications and tests. Personal, social and health education is woven into each subject so that pupils learn effectively how to keep healthy, work well together and develop independent learning skills.

- The curriculum is well supported by enrichment activities. These include: swimming club, gaming club, lower school recreation club and music making. In addition, pupils learn about resilience and the wider natural world through a range of outdoor learning such as climbing, fishing, dry stone walling, survival skills, orienteering and community service.
- The pupil premium fund to support disadvantaged pupils is very well used by leaders. As a result, all pupils, most of whom are in local authority care, make outstanding progress. Leaders carefully judge the barriers to learning that pupils face when they are admitted to the school. They are successful at providing extra opportunities for pupils.
- Leaders use the funding for SEN to make sure that the staffing levels are high. They ensure that pupils are provided with high-quality one-to-one support and in-class help and guidance. Leaders carefully evaluate the impact of funding and support on each pupil and provide local authorities with regular and frequent updates on how this funding is used.
- The provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Leaders make sure that pupils learn about other faiths by working with and visiting local churches and the local mosque. The quality of pupils' artwork is exceptional. It is well crafted, imaginative and thoughtful. Pupils enjoy learning about theatre, by working with professional actors and technicians. This year, pupils presented a production of 'The jungle book' and a pantomime at Christmas. Pupils learn to value and celebrate the differences between people. Leaders have developed regular links with a community support group for adults who have learning difficulties, called The Do It lub. Pupils host breakfast sessions with the club and learn social skills that help others feel valued and important. The school council is active and makes decisions about which charities are supported by the school.

Governance

- The proprietor has a compelling vision for the school. He is deeply committed to ensuring that pupils get the best possible education and the most positive start to the next stage of their lives. He works effectively with leaders to communicate this vision to staff. He helps leaders monitor standards and systems so that high levels of ambition are evident throughout the school.
- The proprietor has weekly meetings with leaders to test their judgements and evaluate their actions. There is an open, supportive relationship between the proprietor and school leaders. They enjoy working with each other and believe that professional challenge is the key to improvement.
- The proprietor visits the school regularly and scrutinises the school's self-evaluation. He visits learning activities to make sure that leaders' analysis is rooted in secure evidence.
- Staff said that they feel involved in the leadership of the school and that they are listened to. This is because the proprietor and school leaders welcome such involvement and are fully committed to dialogue with their colleagues. As a result, staff feel valued and

supported.

- Staff performance is overseen well by the proprietor. He believes there is a clear link between high levels of training for staff and the best possible pupils' outcomes.
- The proprietor checks leaders' planning for safeguarding and helps leaders secure whatever support and training they need. Together with school leaders, he makes sure that the recruitment and staff checking systems are robust and well monitored.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is given the highest priority by leaders and staff throughout the school. Staff are well trained and are familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and the latest relevant guidance from the Secretary of State. The safeguarding policies are published on the school's website and are fit for purpose.
- Leaders are scrupulous in managing the safety of both school sites. Risk assessments are thorough and detailed. For example, considerable planning has gone into managing the lower school site. Emergency services have been involved in risk assessment planning to ensure that everything reasonable is done so that communication is efficient and access to the site is well maintained.
- The curriculum is built around safeguarding, and regular whole days are given over to helping pupils understand how to stay safe. For example, pupils worked on a project to raise awareness of the dangers of child sexual exploitation, and this was backed by detailed training for staff.
- Leaders work closely with other agencies and local authorities, sharing relevant information in a sensitive and timely manner. Pupils get the support they need quickly and effectively.
- Staff have a reflective approach to their safeguarding actions. After any safeguarding issue, they reflect in detail with the school's psychotherapist and make any improvements to their systems that might be needed.
- Staff are well aware of the additional barriers to safety faced by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Staff understand how to help pupils who find communication difficult. Staff enable pupils to express their thoughts, feelings and anxieties. All pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans have clearly identified strategies for keeping pupils safe, and these plans are frequently and regularly reviewed.
- Pupils said that they feel safe and secure on both sites. They are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online and when using mobile phones.
- Pupils are respectful of one another and vigilant to the risks they face. They have learned about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently strong. It is typically well planned, challenging and demanding, which means that pupils make outstanding progress. Learning is well organised, resources are used effectively and there is effective communication between teachers to ensure that assessments are accurate and appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities.
- Pupils enjoy learning new skills. In English lessons, for example, pupils in key stage 3 were proud to show how they could use a variety of writing techniques including complex forms of grammar and punctuation. In science, pupils in key stage 2 learn methods of investigation and a wide scientific vocabulary and use these skills with confidence.
- Teachers use assessment exceptionally well. They use baseline testing to judge what targets to set pupils, and these targets are consistently effective. This is because pupils know what they need to do to improve and teachers have accurately judged the challenges they offer. This gives pupils confidence, and they thrive in their lessons.
- Teachers' planning is highly effective. Teachers plan for next steps in learning by taking careful account of pupils' needs as described in their individual education plans and their EHC plans.
- Pupils make outstanding gains in their understanding, knowledge and skills because teachers use their subject knowledge to help pupils become curious and to love learning. In a science lesson, for example, pupils were learning about 'elephant toothpaste' and, because the content had been made intriguing, pupils wanted to use scientific methods to find out more, research and experiment. In another example, pupils in key stage 2 took part in a music workshop after school, playing guitar and singing their versions of modern songs. Pupils are typically eager to learn.
- Teachers are specialists in their subjects and so command a high level of knowledge. This is supported by leaders' provision of well-planned professional development focused on pupils' wide-ranging needs. The school takes what it calls a 'therapeutic approach' to learning, and this means that teachers listen carefully, give their pupils time to think and ensure that the learning is frequently rewarded. The school successfully encourages pupils to become independent. Pupils are as comfortable working on their own as with groups. Pupils develop an ability to respond thoughtfully to their emotions and challenges.
- Pupils use the feedback they are given by staff to make progress. They improve their work and deepen their thinking because of teachers' skilled questioning, support and guidance. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and they do so with growing confidence. Consequently, they said that lessons are helpful and interesting.
- When pupils make mistakes in their work, they ask how to improve. For example, across the curriculum pupils check their own spelling and punctuation and improve its accuracy.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff successfully develop pupils' confidence and self-awareness. Leaders make sure that staff share any information about changes in pupils' attitudes and quickly provide help. Pupils' EHC plans and personal education plans are well matched to pupils' individual needs. They form the basis of staff's daily work with pupils and are constantly referenced in planning. This means that pupils' needs are well known to staff, and their personal development is carefully managed.
- For some pupils, being at The Roaches School is the first time they have felt part of a supportive and caring community. Staff take this aspect of their work very seriously and have meticulous plans for supporting pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Pupils' mental health is well managed by the staff in liaison with the school's psychotherapist. The curriculum helps pupils learn how to follow a healthy diet. A wide range of sports activities helps pupils learn about fitness. Pupils are given strategies for talking about their hopes, fears and ambitions by the staff who work with them.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and learning. For example, leaders have planned with pupils their eco-school project. They work with pupils to create outdoor sculptures and earth art that pupils have designed. Pupils learn successfully how to help maintain the school grounds and care for animals and plants. In this way, pupils learn that their views are important and they can see the school changing for the better because of their own work and ideas.
- The school has an effective careers curriculum. Pupils learn about working in the public service or care sector through careers enhancement days. They attend the Skills Show at the National Exhibition Centre. Pupils following vocational qualifications have day-release opportunities to experience work-related learning. Independent careers advisers attend pupils' EHC plan review meetings to help prepare pupils for employment. Pupils learn successfully how to complete application forms, curriculum vitae and techniques to cope with job interviews.
- Pupils place a high value on education. Typical comments were, 'The school has changed me for the better', and 'This place has given me a new start.' They enjoy learning and take it seriously. Staff are careful to judge how to manage pupils' learning so that pupils learn how to be focused, self-disciplined and thoughtful about their learning.

Behaviour

- The school's work to promote pupils' behaviour is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically excellent. Pupils are considerate, well mannered and thoughtful. Staff are very successful at helping each pupil make positive changes in their behaviour over time. When pupils first arrive at the school, their needs are carefully assessed. Following this, clear and effective strategies are put in place to make improvements.
- The school is usually a calm and orderly place. Pupils focus on their work. They listen

carefully to their teachers, other adults and each other. On the rare occasions when this does not happen, leaders have a range of strategies in place including safe spaces for pupils to reflect on their behaviour with a member of staff before it escalates further. Very rarely, staff have had to use restraint methods to keep pupils and others safe. Staff are thoroughly trained to do this and records are well kept. Records of restraint show that pupil safety is paramount. After such events, staff scrutinise their actions, and relevant agencies and parents are notified.

- Levels of attendance are very high. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe, supported and encouraged. Pupils who find school challenging make impressive improvements in their attendance. Leaders work closely with local authorities and parents when pupils struggle to attend and ensure that pupils are safe and well during such times as they are absent. The senior placement officer for Stoke-on-Trent local authority praised the school for its safe and secure management of attendance.
- Parents are very pleased with what the school does for their children. The school believes in including families as part of the whole journey of improvement made by pupils. Leaders have not, however, done all they can to include families in the opportunities the school offers. Leaders are ambitious to do more in this area and to expand the reach of their therapeutic service.
- The culture of safeguarding is strong. Pupils are very well supervised during lessons, breaks and after school. Key stage 2 pupils learn how to be responsible and aware of risk when they learn and play. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 respect and look after themselves and the outside areas of the upper school.
- Staff and pupils have spent considerable time learning about important safeguarding issues. For example, all staff completed an e-safety workshop with Staffordshire police. Pupils are not allowed mobile phones on either site. Staff are trained to identify cyber-bullying. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities as set out in safeguarding guidance from the Secretary of State.
- Pupils said that there is no bullying at the school. They said that they know what to do if they find any and feel sure that it would be dealt with effectively by staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils have much lower starting points than other pupils of a similar age and have had variable experiences of school before coming to The Roaches School. Some pupils have had no experience of school at all. However, pupils make outstanding progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, in all key stages.
- All pupils are disadvantaged and have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils focus on enjoying learning. Staff make sure that they are challenged, supported and guided. They have realistic yet demanding targets in all their lessons and in their personal learning plans. As a result of this strong teaching, pupils understand new concepts and learn new skills securely. Staff are regularly in contact with other mainstream and special schools. This helps them to have very high expectations for pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils in Year 11 are successful in gaining a wide range of high-quality qualifications. The grades they attain represent outstanding progress from when they first start at the

school. In 2016 and in 2017, for example, pupils achieved GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, science and art. Pupils also secured entry levels 1, 2 and 3 in a range of subjects such as geography, citizenship, art and physical education.

- The most able pupils make remarkable progress from their starting points. In mathematics, in key stage 3, for example, they learn how to solve algebraic equations and how to compare geometric shape and form. In science in key stage 4, pupils successfully learn about electrical circuitry and chemical equations.
- When pupils join the school, they are given intensive support with their basic literacy and numeracy to make up for the learning they have missed. In mathematics, for example, pupils make exceptional progress throughout the school in fluency, reasoning and problem solving. As a result, they also make strong progress in subjects like history and food technology because their reading and mathematics skills are more secure.
- Pupils in key stage 2 have well-developed reading skills compared to other pupils with similar starting points. The scores they achieve in the Year 6 national reading tests represent outstanding progress, and some reach national averages for pupils of their age. Key stage 2 pupils also take national tests in mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar. From their starting points, they also do exceptionally well in these assessments. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 read well and successfully learn the skills of comprehension and inference. This means that they learn effectively across the curriculum and are more confident about sitting tests and examinations.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. They leave with qualifications that represent outstanding progress from their starting points and they develop secure basic skills in literacy and numeracy. They learn how to study and work with others and have effective understanding of skills such as personal financial budgeting and applying, and being interviewed, for a job or training.

School details

Unique reference number	124495
DfE registration number	860/6017
Inspection number	10012892

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 residential special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Dr Sean Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Mr Matt Wilson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000
Telephone number	01782 523479
Website	www.roachesschool.net
Email address	roachesschool@caretodayparallelpupils.net
Date of previous inspection	8–10 October 2013

Information about this school

- The previous inspection was on 8–10 October 2013.
- The school is one of a group of schools managed by the Care Today Company, which is owned by a sole proprietor.
- Key stage 2 pupils are taught on the lower site and key stages 3 and 4 on the upper site, and these sites are approximately 14 miles apart. The lower school is situated in a rural setting. The upper school is in the centre of an urban environment. All the school's provision is now on either the upper school or lower school sites.
- All pupils have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils have autistic spectrum disorder or social,

emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have both of these SEN.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in lessons through key stages 2, 3 and 4 and conducted a joint work scrutiny with a senior leader in every lesson.
- A range of meetings were held between the inspector and the headteachers, executive headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team and middle leadership staff.
- The inspector had a discussion with the proprietor.
- There were meetings with support staff including the school's psychotherapist. The inspector had a discussion with a parent.
- There was a telephone discussion with Stoke-on-Trent local authority's senior placement officer.
- The inspector met with pupils to discuss their learning and workbooks.
- There was a scrutiny of the single central record. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and examined a range of records relating to recruitment, welfare plans and actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation the school produces as part of its self-evaluation and development planning. These included policies and documents published on the school's website and made available during the inspection.
- The inspector took account of the 26 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were too few responses to Parent View to analyse, but the three freetext responses were taken into account. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Graham Tyrer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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