

Inspection of Roaches School

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

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Roaches is a welcoming school where pupils thrive. Many pupils join the school with a history of poor school attendance. Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils. These nurturing relationships support pupils to attend and achieve well.

Pupils say they feel happy and safe. They also say that bullying is rare. They are confident that staff will deal with it effectively should it occur. Staff know the pupils well. They are skilled in calming pupils down and supporting pupils to regulate their emotions. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. They have carefully crafted a curriculum that allows each individual pupil to achieve well. Pupils are given the help and support they need to be successful citizens in society. Nearly all pupils leave the school for further education or employment. One pupil said: 'We love this school. They really care about us. In our other schools, they gave up on us, but not here. They have high expectations and really push us, but they also know when to stop pushing.'

Pupils enjoy the wider experiences provided for them at school. For example, pupils speak positively about learning mountain biking, rock climbing and outdoor survival skills.

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

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Staff share these expectations. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced and allows pupils to be successful. All pupils follow their own individual learning pathway that is tailored to their individual needs. This allows pupils to gain the knowledge and skills they need before they leave at the end of Year 11.

The curriculum is well planned in the majority of subjects, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In these subjects, staff have ensured that assessment is used well to identify what pupils know and remember. Teachers plan activities to address any gaps in learning. They make sure that they revisit the important learning that pupils need to remember. However, in some subjects, such as personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), leaders have not yet identified the most important knowledge for pupils to know and remember during their time at the school. This means that pupils do not remember the most important knowledge they need.

Pupils are given regular opportunities to read both to an adult and independently. Pupils enjoy these opportunities. Leaders use well-chosen books to enhance pupils' learning about different subjects. The early reading leader is well trained and has a secure knowledge of phonics. The phonics curriculum has been well considered. Leaders make careful checks on the sounds pupils know when they arrive and adapt learning appropriately.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff understand pupils' learning, social and emotional needs well. They work effectively with pupils to overcome any difficulties they may have. Many of the pupils have had negative experiences at their previous schools. Leaders work well with pupils to help them understand emotions and develop successful strategies to cope when they find situations a challenge. As a result, leaders create deliberate opportunities to develop pupils' confidence and resilience and ensure pupils feel successful. For example, all pupils learn to play the electric guitar and drums. They regularly perform concerts in school and the local community. Over time, leaders' actions have enabled pupils to attend school much more regularly and to achieve well.

Leaders have developed an inclusive environment. Pupils have an understanding of different faiths, cultures and ethnicities. They are respectful and tolerant of beliefs different to their own. They are welcoming to all pupils and show empathy for others. One of the younger pupils said: 'We have some pupils who don't like loud noises and sometimes they don't feel safe with new people. So, we make sure we look after them and give them a hug if they need it.' Pupils are taught how to stay safe online.

All pupils receive impartial information to help them consider their future careers. Pupils in Year 11 spoke positively about how leaders have supported their further education and career choices. Pupils are given meaningful opportunities to gain further qualifications, such as in hill walking, kayaking and climbing. However, this support is not yet embedded in other year groups. Although there are some activities to support this, for example visits to career fairs and visiting speakers, the careers programme is not well structured and planned. This means that some activities are ad-hoc rather than following a clear and well-structured careers programme.

The proprietor and the new governing body work effectively with leaders. They have ensured that the independent school standards are met. Leaders work closely with other leaders across the company to hold each other to account for the standards in the school. Staff enjoy working at the school. They acknowledge that at times it can be challenging, but that leaders support their workload and well-being effectively.

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. They have also ensured that the safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe. They know pupils well and use this knowledge to spot any unusual behaviour which may indicate safeguarding concerns. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, and they are aware of the

issues most likely to affect pupils. All staff know how to record concerns should they arise.

Leaders ensure that all adults are safe to work with children. They carry out all the appropriate recruitment checks. Record-keeping is detailed; however, some systems, including the school's single central record, are cumbersome and this makes it difficult to easily analyse incidents and patterns. However, this does not put pupils at risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Most subjects are well planned and considered. In these subjects, leaders have thought about the essential knowledge that they want the pupils to remember and in what order. This is not the case in all subjects. Leaders need to ensure that all curriculum subjects are considered so they identify and sequence the key knowledge that they want pupils to remember.
- Systems for recording information, including the school's single central record (SCR), are overly complicated and it is difficult to find information easily. Although no pupils are at risk from harm, it does mean that leaders at times find it difficult to find and use the information. Leaders need to ensure that record-keeping systems, including the SCR, ensure that information is presented clearly and effectively so that leaders can use the information easily.
- Although careers education is in place, it does not always support pupils to have the most comprehensive understanding of opportunities available to them. Leaders need to ensure they develop a well-planned and sequenced careers programme that takes into account pupils' thoughts and hopes about their aspirations for the future.

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

Unique reference number	124495
DfE registration number	860/6017
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10238117
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Dr Sean Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Deb Jackson and Nicky Woolley (Co-headteachers)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000
Telephone number	01782 523479
Website	www.roachesschool.net
Email address	roachesschool@caretodayparallelpairs.net
Date of previous inspection	3 to 5 July 2018

Information about this school

- The school is situated over two sites. Key stage 1 and 2 pupils are placed in the lower school, which is a rural school situated approximately 14 miles away from the upper school. Key stage 3 and 4 pupils are taught in the upper school, which is located in an urban environment in Stoke-on-Trent.
- Each site is led by its own headteacher.
- All pupils have SEND. Most also have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Pupils are referred to the school by several local authorities.
- The school is one of a group of schools managed by the Care Today Company, which is owned by a sole proprietor.
- The school opened in 1995 and is currently registered for 58 pupils aged five to 16 years of age.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school does not have a religious character.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

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

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteachers, teachers and teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector met the co-chair of the governing body, who represented the proprietor board.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding policy, along with a range of safeguarding information. This work included scrutiny of the school's single central record of checks made on adults. Inspectors checked staff's safeguarding training and spoke to staff about safeguarding procedures.

- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including policies, curriculum plans, health and safety records, behaviour records and the school's improvement plan.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector toured both of the school sites to check that they met the requirements of the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ian Hardman

His Majesty's Inspector

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