

Roaches School

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

Inspection dates

8–10 October 2013

Overall effectiveness

	Overall effectiveness	Overall effectiveness
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They respond extremely well to the school's excellent support and quality of education. Pupils' behaviour and attendance improve and their self-esteem and confidence grow rapidly.
- Teaching is outstanding. Lessons are interesting, fast-paced and very well planned to help pupils enjoy them, concentrate, learn, and recognise how well they are doing.
- Pupils make outstanding progress. They quickly fill in gaps in their previous learning. Pupils often develop skills, knowledge and understanding at a quicker rate than their mainstream peers of similar ability.
- The leaders and managers have successfully maintained the outstanding provision noted in the previous inspection. They have improved pupils' cultural development as recommended.
- The school's leaders are clear that they want the school and residences to transform pupils' life chances. The school is very successful in doing this. Staff are in full agreement with the school's aims and say they are proud to work at a school that 'goes to great lengths to change the lives of some very troubled children'.
- The curriculum is outstanding. It provides the required subjects and many more. It emphasises improvement in pupils' personal development and literacy and numeracy skills, and equips them very well for the next step in their lives.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected with one day's notice. Ten lessons were observed, taught by nine teachers and one higher level teaching assistant. Some of these were observed jointly with a senior leader.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher and heads of upper and lower school, and informal discussions were held with pupils and other staff.
- The views of pupils and staff were gained from inspection questionnaires, the school's surveys and the Point in Time survey for residential pupils. There were too few responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, to be shown, but parents' views through the latest school survey were taken into account.
- The school's records of progress and behaviour, policies, and various other documents and records were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Judith Charlesworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Roaches is an independent special school for boys and girls aged seven to 16 who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some pupils have additional problems such as moderate learning difficulties, Tourette's syndrome and mildly compulsive behaviour. Some pupils are resident at the school.
- There are 38 pupils aged nine to 16 on roll, of whom the great majority are boys. Thirty-three pupils have statements of special educational needs.
- Pupils generally join the school with a history of failed previous school placements and significant social difficulties which have adversely affected their ability to learn.
- The school is located on two sites 14 miles apart. The lower school is situated on a farm in an isolated part of the Peak District. The upper school is located in two neighbouring mid-19th century buildings on the high road of a small town. The school has an additional annexe about one mile away from the upper school which is used for specialist technology provision.
- An inspection of one of the two registered children's homes took place at the same time as this inspection and is reported separately. The school's educational provision was last inspected in November 2010.
- The school aims to support pupils' return to mainstream education where possible; to ensure that they leave school at the end of Year 11 with work, training or a college place set up; and to equip them for an independent and successful adult life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the recently-implemented systems for monitoring, evaluating and supporting the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in order to determine patterns and trends. Use the outcomes of these processes to plan for improvement in more detail.
- Improve the recording of staff training so that it is more detailed and easier to determine when refresher training is due.
- Streamline policies and procedures to ensure that the elements which are specific to the school are easier to understand.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Most pupils enter the school at least two years behind expectations for their age and have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Sometimes these are immediately evident, such as some secondary-aged pupils' lack of knowledge of mathematical times-tables and difficulties in telling the time on a 24 hour clock. At other times, the gaps are less apparent but are nevertheless a barrier to progress. On one occasion, for example, a pupil discussed melting and dissolving with apparent understanding, but then said that having poured boiling water onto jelly cubes, he would leave the mixture to 'defrost'.

Individuals' records over the past few years show that pupils steadily fill in gaps in learning and make rapid progress. Because of the outstanding teaching and curriculum, pupils often reach levels close to expectations for their age in less time than their mainstream peers, relative to their varying abilities. Pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills improve rapidly due to expert teaching, an interesting, relevant and practical curriculum, and individual support where necessary. Speaking and listening skills improve as pupils learn to take turns and respect what others have to say. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 11, all pupils have achieved accreditation that is relevant and helpful to their futures. Many pupils gain GCSEs in several subjects at higher grades than predicted from their end of Key Stage 2 levels of attainment. This equips them very well for the next stage of their lives.

Pupils' progress in other areas of the curriculum is also rapid. This is often due to the integral support for personal development. For example, music and outdoor activities are both taught as part of the academic curriculum, but are also designed to support pupils' personal development. Many pupils learn how to play an instrument so that they can play in a band. This involves learning music skills as well as how to listen carefully, work as a team and have the confidence to perform. These skills have an excellent effect on pupils' ability to learn well.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. The school considers that supporting personal development is a key function and does this extremely well. Staff apply the behaviour management system rigorously and pupils fully accept it and look forward to their merits and rewards. Individuals' behaviour is assessed on entry to the school and frequently thereafter. Careful professional tracking of behaviour shows considerable improvement. From being angry and distrustful of school and adults, pupils become confident, friendly young people who enjoy learning. Their attendance is good and they rarely walk out of lessons, both of which are a great improvement on previous behaviour. One pupil explained that although she missed her friends, she knew that coming to Roaches was 'good for me in the long-run'.

Pupils' behaviour in class is often exemplary and they have very positive, enthusiastic attitudes to learning. This is due to expert teaching and an interesting curriculum. In a Spanish lesson, for example, pupils were asked to move around the room and find colours that the teacher described in Spanish. Even though this involved a lot of movement and competition, the pupils remained sensible throughout, learned the names of six colours and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Pupils' relationships with staff are excellent, and their attitudes to visitors are friendly and helpful. Over lunch in the lower school, for instance, pupils struck up conversations with the inspector spontaneously and with real interest. Their relationships with one another are largely positive.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported by both school and the residences. Roaches is highly inclusive and values every pupil and their opinion regardless of their background. Pupils learn from this positive atmosphere and the school's efforts to teach them

respect for others and to appreciate the richness of life away from the locality. As a result, they become well prepared for a life in modern, multi-cultural, democratic British society. Many pupils come to school with a negative view of the law and public institutions. The school works hard to change these views through the curriculum, individual support and positive external links, such as with the police. The local police officer reports that pupils are happy, sociable individuals who are not a problem to the neighbourhood and make a good contribution to the community.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding and pupils overwhelmingly agree. Teaching strongly supports pupils' achievement and personal development and all independent school standards are met. Teaching is exceptionally well planned. It is closely based on frequent assessments of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Lessons include demanding learning objectives set for pupils of varying ability, and additionally, work takes full account of each individual's personal learning targets. Learning objectives are outlined at the start of lessons, and reviewed at the end so pupils know whether they have achieved them. Pupils assess their own achievement on pre-prepared slips at the end of lessons, which informs them and the staff what might need to be repeated to secure learning. Pupils are constantly challenged to progress, and staff make frequent reference to what they will need to do to move, for example, from a GCSE grade E to grade D.

Teaching is relaxed and well resourced. Lessons are fast-paced and usually include a range of short, varied tasks which help to keep pupils interested and concentrating. Computer technology is used well to inform and engage pupils, for example, by providing short film clips or interesting diagrams that the class can label together. Teachers have good subject knowledge so that they can answer pupils' questions and extend their knowledge and understanding. The small numbers in each class group and very good work of support staff mean that adults check on pupils' knowledge and understanding all the time. As a result, they quickly correct any misconceptions and keep pupils calm and learning. Marking is informative and tells pupils how to improve their work or reach a higher level. Classrooms are full of displays of aids to learning and pupils' own work. These indicate high levels of care, as seen in their displays on the solar system and the human heart.

Teaching makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. This is due to constant praise, encouragement and opportunities for collaborative working, and the consistent use of the reward system. Very little additional behaviour management is required in class.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The curriculum is outstanding and all independent school standards are met. It is very well planned to suit pupils of all abilities and underpins the excellent lesson plans and teaching which lead to pupils' outstanding progress. The curriculum includes the required subjects for each age group, and many more besides. For example, a modern foreign language is taught at Key Stage 2, and pupils are currently very much enjoying learning Spanish. The curriculum at both key stages includes several subjects to support the key area of pupils' personal development. These have a very positive effect on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is also a strong focus on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, the lack of which have often contributed to their low self-esteem and behavioural difficulties in the past. The curriculum is tailored to an extent to suit each individual. For example, pupils have individual and group sessions of music, anger management, horticulture, animal care and art therapy to suit their particular needs.

The curriculum at lower school is taught on a primary, class-based model. It is often topic-based to help pupils use their learning across different subjects. This term's topic is The Romans, and excellent planning shows how this is the basis of lessons in a range of subjects,

including design and technology, art, history and Spanish. The lower school has good links with local primary schools which offer pupils a taste of mainstream life and help prepare individuals for return to mainstream. Pupils at Key Stage 4 choose accreditation options according to their interests and abilities. The school provides up to six GCSE and Entry Level courses, taught by subject specialists, as well as a range of other qualifications. Local colleges give Year 11 pupils the opportunity to follow vocational courses such as construction and engineering. Work experience is arranged at Staffordshire Partnership safety-assessed placements.

The curriculum is enriched by activities such as camping, visits, football tournaments with local schools, and outdoor educational pursuits such as kayaking, climbing, cycling and shelter-building. Extra-curricular activities for day pupils are limited by transport arrangements but a wide range is provided for all boarders which contributes very well to their personal and academic development.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and all independent school standards are met. Pupils are cared for very well and policies and practices to safeguard pupils and ensure their health and safety are implemented effectively. Safeguarding and safe recruitment procedures are carried out in line with the company's stringent policies. All adults undergo checks for their suitability to work with children and young people before they start work. However, although the company policies include all relevant aspects, they include both residential and school settings and the elements which are specific to the school can be difficult to interpret. This also relates to other policies, such as the health and safety, fire safety and complaints policies. Staff are fully trained in child protection when they join the company and refresher training takes place regularly. Overall, though, training is not well enough recorded to make sure that is clear and updated in plenty of time. Fire safety is addressed rigorously, in keeping with company policy. All tests and checks are regularly completed and logged. The fire risk assessment is regularly updated.

Staff are sharply aware of the possibility of bullying. The school has good procedures for dealing with any incidents which include 'shaking hands', saying 'sorry' or similar reparation after any incident. Key worker sessions and personal, social and health education emphasise the zero tolerance approach to bullying. Classrooms have very good displays on the various types of bullying and urge pupils to tell an adult if it has occurred. Almost all pupils say they feel safe at school. Pupils' behaviour improves markedly during their time at Roaches. It is very well managed by the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour management system and the supportive, calm atmosphere in which all pupils are valued regardless of their difficulties. Physical interventions are infrequent and only used as a last resort.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school are good. The head teacher and heads of upper and lower school are clear that they want the school to be outstanding in all ways and openly seek advice on how it can be improved. The staff are keen to fulfil this vision and present as a committed, professional, supportive team. Several staff members say that they are grateful for the professional training and development either provided by or supported by the school. Together, the senior leaders and staff have developed systems and practices that underpin an excellent quality of education and support for pupils' personal development. The independent school standards in all seven parts are met.

The proprietor is supportive, as is the 'governing body' of three people who act as friends to the school and are available in case of a complaint being made, but who have no governance, financial or decision-making powers. The senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's

strengths and areas for development, and this leads to some development planning. The heads of upper and lower school monitor curriculum planning closely and know individual staff members' and pupils' skills and achievements extremely well. The senior leaders have recognised that their judgements on these aspects need to move from focusing on individuals to a more strategic, whole-school view. Helpful, external, professional advice and support have been provided for the last few months to help confirm the senior leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching and begin to assess the patterns and trends in pupils' achievement. While now established, this work is not yet developed well enough to be included in improvement plans.

The school has developed stimulating and well-equipped and resourced classrooms on both sites. All aspects of the premises meet requirements. The outdoor grounds are used very well to support curricular, play and leisure activities. Close relationships have been established with parents, carers and local authorities whose views are very supportive of the school. Good support is offered to parents and carers of day pupils, for example, through collection of their child in the mornings if they are reluctant to get in the taxi. Very good information is provided to relevant people about the school and pupils' progress, and the procedure for handling complaints meets requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education and care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education and care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education and care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	124495
Social care unique reference number	SC005042
Inspection number	422711
DfE registration number	860/6017

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Proprietor	Sean Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Matt Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40964
Telephone number	01782 523479
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