

Redwood

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135202
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	381835
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Sherriff
Headteacher	Stuart Pidgeon
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
School address	Hudsons Walk Rochdale OL11 5EF
Telephone number	01706 750815
Fax number	01706 751890
Email address	stuart.pidgeon@redwood-school.com



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Introduction

Inspection team

Alastair Younger
Maureen Coleman
Freda Jackson

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Twenty one lessons were observed with twenty different teachers being seen. Meetings were held involving many senior staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Informal discussions were held with many other staff and pupils. Inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents and carers through the 122 questionnaires returned. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including that relating to school improvement and the care and safeguarding of pupils.

Information about the school

The school is larger in size than most schools of its type nationally. Pupils attending Redwood have a very wide range of disabilities or special educational needs. The main groups are pupils with moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum conditions. There are smaller groups of pupils with specific learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; speech, language and communication needs; multi-sensory impairment and physical disability. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are about twice as many boys as girls. About a half of all pupils are White British. Many other minority ethnic groups are represented, mainly Pakistani or Bangladeshi. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Most pupils come from the area around Rochdale. In addition to the sixth form, the school offers a one-year 'Bridging' programme based in the adjacent mainstream school. This is for a small number of pupils who elect not to join the sixth form but desire extra preparation before moving on to college or vocational training.

The school has gained many awards, including the Times Educational Supplement award for outstanding sporting initiatives and collaboration and the Project Ability Award from Sport England and the English Federation of Disability Sport.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- Redwood is an outstanding school. The sixth form is equally outstanding. Under inspired leadership, management and governance it has improved since the last inspection and is in a good position to keep building on its strengths. The work of the school is highly respected and appreciated by parents and carers and pupils strongly express the view that the school helps them to do as well as they can.
- Pupils achieve outstandingly well because they are exceptionally well taught and they work very hard and with great enthusiasm. Each day is filled with a multitude of stimulating learning opportunities, well matched to pupils' individual needs and abilities. Students in the sixth form make particularly impressive progress.
- Teaching is outstanding. Highly skilled teachers ensure that pupils are set work that interests and challenges them. Individuals are expertly supported in their learning and behaviour and relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Teachers take great care to find a balance between learning and personal development. They miss no opportunity to promote social skills and create a genuine sense of celebration of success.
- Pupils are very strongly encouraged to work with as much independence as possible and to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. They behave outstandingly well. Any misbehaviour is promptly, effectively and sensitively dealt with to make sure that pupils' safety is never put at risk.
- Through outstanding leadership, management and governance, a highly performing staff team has been built. Teaching is exceptionally well led. Staff are managed very effectively and constantly supported to develop their expertise through an excellent range of training opportunities. Every aspect of the school's work is rigorously checked and where the possibility for improvement is identified action is quickly taken. While all leaders and managers work effectively and diligently, there is some duplication of subject leadership roles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify clearer roles for subject leaders to incorporate whole-school responsibility for their subjects in order for them to be held accountable for raising standards across the whole school in their respective subjects

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

On account of their disabilities or special educational needs, all pupils enter the school with attainment that is well below the national average. From this point nearly all make exceptional progress in relation to expectations and, taking into account all the difficulties they face, this amounts to outstanding achievement.

Learning is often at an incremental level, with tiny gains being made in each lesson. What is important is that these gains are recognised and recorded by staff, and they happen all the time in classrooms, in social situations or in any of the activities included in the excellent, wide ranging curriculum. It is the relentlessness of learning rather than its speed that defines the progress made by pupils. Most parents and carers are justifiably thrilled with the progress their children make and pupils are very proud of their achievements. Progress in the sixth form is frequently stunning as students learn how to apply previous learning and use it in developing vocational skills and the capacity to transfer them successfully into adult life. Nearly all students in the 'Bridging Year' make successful transfers to the next stages of education or training within that time. All pupils gain accreditation appropriate to their ability before they leave, peaking at qualifications representing attainment at the lower levels of the national curriculum. All pupils leave to positive destinations and there have been none in recent years who have been lost to education, employment or training after leaving.

In every lesson observed by inspectors, achievement was at least good and often outstanding. Pupils learn that if they work hard they will be able to complete tasks successfully. This motivates them. They develop good attitudes to learning, pay attention and behave exceptionally well. This was seen to excellent effect in an English lesson where pupils with a very wide range of ability were helped to develop a better understanding of how stories are written.

Very few pupils are able to read but huge inroads are made in helping them to communicate by any means possible, including verbally, non-verbally or through the use of technological aids. In a Key Stage 3 lesson, for instance, pupils were seen matching sounds to symbols including letters and pictures; this was helping them to communicate their own first-names effectively. There is no measurable difference in the achievement of groups of pupils who have different kinds of needs.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is never less than good and much of it is outstanding. Parents and carers are almost unanimous in saying their children are well taught. Relationships between

adults and pupils are excellent. Behaviour in lessons is particularly good because staff are adept at preventing misbehaviour rather than finding themselves in a position where they have to manage it. Teachers demonstrate an acute awareness of pupils' previous learning and the ability to gauge carefully the next step each pupil needs to make to move forward. Planning is characterised by the very clear identification of personalised learning objectives and the means by which these can be achieved through variation in tasks and the degree of support given to individuals. Teachers take great care to ensure that pupils understand what they are doing. Excellent practice was observed at the end of a sixth form catering lesson when the teacher took meticulous care to check what each student had learned and remembered during the lesson, rather than reiterating what they had done.

Classroom staff are highly skilled in promoting communication by any means possible. Many are extremely proficient in the use of signing. They fully understand the use and availability of keyboards, switches and other technological aids. All staff are highly alert to very basic gestures that can suggest acknowledgement or awareness of what is happening or to express anxiety or discomfort.

The high quality of teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff set an excellent example to pupils as to how they should work together in harmony. Pupils are encouraged to celebrate each other's achievements and to take care of those less able than themselves. Classroom walls carry prominent displays that discourage bullying and promote friendship. Cultural awareness is developed well; an outstanding lesson was observed as Key Stage 3 pupils learned about Japanese culture.

Teachers take great care to present pupils with a highly appropriate and stimulating curriculum. They focus strongly on promoting basic skills and personal and social development, but they make sure to include a huge range of other activities that pupils particularly enjoy. The success of teaching in physical education has resulted in many pupils representing the area in a wide variety of competitive sports and winning medals at national athletics championships.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They show a keen awareness of how to make the school a safe and happy place. Records show that the behaviour of pupils, as observed by inspectors, was very typical of what happens every day. Nearly all parents and carers feel that there is a high standard of behaviour in the school and that their children feel safe. Pupils say that behaviour is good, especially in lessons and that they feel safe. These views are strongly endorsed by inspectors. Bullying is very rare. There is a high degree of harmony between pupils of different ethnicity. Attendance is good and has been improving year-on-year for three years. Punctuality is excellent.

In lessons, pupils settle to work quickly, pay attention to instructions, concentrate hard and try their best. Movement between lessons, and at the start and end of the day, is very sensible and orderly and characterised by pupils' awareness of the well-being of others. This is typified by the consideration given by pupils to wheelchair users and those who move more slowly than themselves.

Pupils are strongly encouraged to become more independent and accept responsibility. They do so in an exemplary fashion. There is an extensive programme of training to help pupils travel independently. This peaks in the sixth form where students show considerable pride and confidence in managing arrangements that give them choice and freedom. Staff excel in drawing the fine line between what pupils want and what they need.

Pupils whose assessed needs identify them as being prone to unacceptable behaviour have individual behaviour plans which are detailed, well understood by staff and rigorously implemented. They ensure that the pupil involved and those around him or her are kept safe and cause minimal disruption to others.

Sixth form students show considerable maturity in the way they communicate confidently with visitors and make them feel welcome. They are proud of their achievements and the way they can mix with peers from other schools when they attend college courses. Students on the 'Bridging' programme and some from Year 11 talked confidently and delightfully to inspectors about their enterprise achievements.

Leadership and management

Outstanding leadership, management and governance have been instrumental in bringing the school to the pinnacle of success. There has been a consistently effective drive to improve teaching and learning. Highly effective training has helped staff to develop enhanced skills in the roles they play. With this, the promotion of teaching and care are equally balanced and personal ambition is promoted alongside the needs of the school. Successful staff development has helped the school move forward from good at the previous inspection to outstanding. The school has proved its capacity to improve further.

At the school's foundation, following the merger of five schools, the management structure accommodated many personnel who had previously held posts of responsibility. This resulted in some duplication of responsibility, especially amongst subject leaders. Senior leaders and the governing body agree with inspectors that middle management should be rationalised, with single responsibility for each subject and aspect of the school's work rather than across a single key stage.

The school provides an exceptional curriculum which strongly promotes pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development. It includes a wealth of wonderful enrichment opportunities involving visits and visitors. The curriculum strongly promotes communication, personal responsibility and independence. The sixth form curriculum is extraordinarily effective in the way it brings to fruition the learning and progress of earlier years, shows students how to apply their skills and knowledge in real life situations and provides them with highly appropriate work experience.

Equality is strongly promoted. No group of pupils achieves noticeably differently from any other. There are no signs of discrimination and the staff team provide excellent role models. Most minority ethnic pupils have a staff member from their own culture to whom they can relate; this helps to remove barriers to learning. All safeguarding requirements are met.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Redwood, Rochdale, OL11 5EF

It was a joy to inspect your school the other day. Thank you for making us welcome and for letting us know what you think of the school.

I know that most of you find reading hard so I have asked your staff to explain this letter to you. I am keeping it very short to make this easier.

Your school is outstanding. This means that it is one of the best.

You never stop learning. Because of this your achievement is outstanding.

Your behaviour is excellent. You work hard and are cheerful and polite. You feel very safe because you are very well looked after.

You are outstandingly well taught. Your teachers are very good at knowing what you can achieve and how to help you.

Your school is outstandingly well led and managed. This means that it keeps getting better. You are helping by working hard and behaving well, so keep it up.

Well done you sixth formers and those of you on the 'Bridging' programme. It is very rare to see such excellence.

We could not understand why you have two people in charge of each subject. We have asked your headteacher to look at this.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger
Lead inspector

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