

Inspection of a good school: Rachel Madocks School

Eagle Avenue, Cowplain, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO8 9XP

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2023

Outcome

Rachel Madocks School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Rachel Madocks School is a place for safe and joyful learning. Across the whole school, all pupils follow an appropriate curriculum relevant to their needs. Pupils are taught by well-trained teachers and support staff. They care about pupils' progress and meeting their individual special educational needs and/or disabilities.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Communication is at the heart of everything the school does. Staff place huge importance on helping pupils to communicate well. They help pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they will need for their lives ahead. The school is well resourced with a range of specialist facilities and sensory interventions to support pupils, including access to the large swimming pool.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Staff skilfully support pupils, recognising that their behaviour is a form of communication. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. If a pupil's behaviour slips, staff use personalised strategies to help them stay calm. Staff always help pupils to understand their feelings. Bullying is rare. If there is any, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

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

The provision starts in early years and continues through to the sixth form. Leaders have designed a curriculum which closely matches the needs of each individual pupil. The curriculum has three age- and needs-based phases that they call 'departments' which work alongside pathways, which are designed to meet pupils' particular needs. Staff use extensive checks on pupils' learning effectively to determine what pupils need. This information helps staff to provide the right opportunities that build pupils' learning step by step. Everything is geared towards pupils achieving lifelong success.

The curriculum provides pupils with the building blocks they need for adult life, such as being able to express their wishes and learning how to stay safe in the community and online. The content pupils learn about staying safe is well sequenced. As a result, pupils

know the risks they could face. Pupils are supported to communicate using a range of means, including symbols and highly appropriate electronic devices. They develop their communication skills very well. For example, where appropriate, reading is combined with recognising symbols and interpreting signs. Books and stories are widely used to underpin this learning.

Leaders and staff are committed to helping pupils and students manage their own behaviour. By approaching negative behaviour as a form of communication, staff quickly understand what is wrong and use planned responses to help pupils. Because of this, learning is not disrupted. Pupils and staff regularly discuss positive behaviour targets and celebrate successes together. This helps to forge strong relationships that form the basis for overcoming pupils' challenges.

There are opportunities for pupils' broader development, though these are not always linked to what is being taught in lessons. The ambition is for all pupils to work towards successful experiences in the community, including, where possible, work experience. As one parent said, 'School staff go above and beyond for the children.' The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is of high quality. Pupils enjoy lessons that include aspects of fundamental British values. They take part in whole-school activities every day which foster a sense of togetherness. An example of this togetherness is how pupils enjoy the different music played to everyone on the way into school each morning. However, there is no link between the music and what is learned in lessons.

Leaders have given a great deal of thought and attention to mental health and well-being, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. There are a range of opportunities that are used to help everyone in the school community, including staff, pupils and parents and carers. The result of this support is that everyone has been able to get back to positive routines smoothly.

Students in the sixth form and upper school groups follow a broad curriculum that builds on what they have learned in the secondary curriculum. Leaders and teachers in the sixth form know their students exceptionally well. This helps them to support students to build knowledge and prepare them for their next steps. Students benefit from a range of other experiences and opportunities. Crucially, these include being a part of the school's residential trips. However, similar to other school groups, learning in lessons does not yet go hand-in-hand with these wider opportunities.

Staff are proud to work at the school and value the support leaders give them. Leaders consider staff's well-being and their workload. A comprehensive support package for well-being is in place. Governors know the school well. They provide challenge and support for leaders to continually improve the quality of education for all pupils. They play a key and active role in ensuring leaders receive the constructive support they need.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a strong safeguarding culture. They prioritise training for staff. Staff at all levels are quick to act to keep pupils safe. They know their pupils exceptionally well. This means that they are particularly alert to the additional risks their pupils might face. Staff are clear about the processes they should follow if they have concerns. Governors take their roles very seriously and are well informed about safeguarding.

Through the carefully planned curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. All pupils are taught how to communicate their opinions and learn to recognise when they need to seek help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not yet linked the academic curriculum with personal development opportunities. This means that pupils do not develop some of their learning as quickly as they could. Leaders need to ensure that these two elements are more closely aligned and linked together.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	116611
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10256542
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Brooker
Headteacher	Niki Wilson
Website	www.rachelmadocks.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Rachel Maddocks School is a special school
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school makes provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, multi-sensory impairments, physical disabilities, autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors met with the head teacher, both assistant headteachers and three members of the extended leadership team. Inspectors also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. They checked the school's record of recruitment checks and spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, communicated with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Gary Tostevin, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rachel McDonald-Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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