

Inspection of a good school: Rotherham Aspire

New Street, Rawmarsh, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S62 5AF

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 May 2024

Outcome

Rotherham Aspire continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school provides pupils with the care, support and knowledge they need when other forms of education have not been successful for them.

The school's principles of every day being a new day, and pupils being supported with joy, kindness and care, are apparent across the school's three sites. There is a common understanding among the staff team that quickly forming positive relationships with pupils, and helping them to recognise and manage their behaviour, are fundamental to pupils' success. Pupils feel safe and valued. Staff subtly check on pupils' emotions and well-being. They spot when pupils are finding something challenging. They provide calm and reassuring support when pupils need it most.

The school provides a curriculum that is rooted in pupils gaining the knowledge they need to be successful in life beyond the school. Pupils are used to talking about their futures. They are successful in their academic and vocational studies. They talk about how they have already started to apply the practical elements of their courses, such as catering, outside school. Many pupils know what they need to do to achieve their career ambitions.

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

Establishing strong relationships between staff and pupils, and with a wide range of local and wider agencies, is a strength of the school. Work to support pupils is well connected between families, the school, the local authority and other specialists. As a result, the needs of pupils are addressed and barriers to their success are removed.

Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics because leaders have prioritised these aspects of the curriculum. For example, pupils in the early stages of reading are given frequent and precise support to help them read well. Effective training has ensured that staff are consistent in their teaching of reading and give pupils books to read that are well

matched to the sounds they know. Many pupils read with eagerness and expression. Phonics lessons, one-to-one catch-up sessions and reading aloud to an adult are well-established daily routines. Pupils feel, and are, successful. Similarly in mathematics, the school has made sure that pupils are taught content daily with lots of opportunities to practise and apply their new knowledge. Checks on learning help teachers adapt their plans to address misconceptions and cover content that may have previously been missed or forgotten.

The school has mapped out a comprehensive and well-designed curriculum in other subjects, such as geography, history and science. Progression of expected knowledge is clear. Some of the very early stages of this curriculum can be seen in books across year groups and when speaking to pupils. The work that has started is promising. There is still much to do, particularly for pupils in key stage 3, where work has got off to a slower start because of challenges in recruitment. Leaders at all levels have already identified this for improvement.

Improvements have been made to the checks that staff make on what pupils know and can do when they join the school. Staff quickly give pupils the support they need. They adapt the curriculum appropriately for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities and other vulnerabilities. The school is developing assessment processes alongside their work to improve the curriculum.

Pupils have experienced challenges in education before they joined the school. Many have been out of school or had poor attendance for some time. Despite the school's positive work to quickly establish good relationships, and their rigorous work to check on and promote attendance, a notable proportion of pupils do not attend school daily.

The personal development curriculum has been designed to continually revisit the aspects pupils need most. Keeping safe and making good choices are prioritised. Pupils talk with understanding of the risks they may face. Pupils know what impact actions such as taking drugs could have on them and those around them. Pupils trust the adults they work with. Several say that they feel better informed about the world since joining the school.

The school makes careful choices of alternative providers for pupils to attend to widen curriculum opportunities. Pupils take part in activities such as motor mechanics and woodwork and gain vocational qualifications. Checks on these settings are rigorous. Partnerships with the providers are strong. Travel to school, checks on attendance and the progress and welfare of pupils are very carefully overseen by the school.

Members of the management committee support school leaders well in their work. Members varied backgrounds and expertise enable them to support and challenge in good measure. They check on the well-being of leaders, who in turn check in on, and communicate daily with, staff about their work and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in subjects beyond English and mathematics is at the early stages of implementation. Well-defined curriculum plans are starting to be reflected in what pupils know and remember, but this is limited, particularly in key stage 3. The school has not decided how it will check on what pupils know in these subjects. The school should continue its work to establish a well-connected curriculum and assessment process and make sure that all staff are confident in its delivery.
- A significant proportion of pupils do not attend school well enough. They miss out on the education and experiences offered by the school. The school should continue to work with families, and promote the good quality of care and education at the school, so that families ensure their children come to school every day.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137823
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10297361
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lisa McCall
Headteacher	Lee Morrirt
Website	www.rotherhamaspire.org
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have come out of mainstream education for a number of reasons, including permanent exclusion. Some pupils with an education, health and care plan are awaiting a placement in a specialist school.
- The school has three sites: Rawmarsh Aspire, Hutton Park Aspire and Catcliffe Aspire.
- Staff at Rotherham Aspire provide outreach work for other schools within the local authority.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and seven unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 headteacher, all other members of the senior leadership team, representatives from the management committee, who have responsibility for the governance of the school, and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard pupils read.
- The lead inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, visited lessons and spoke to pupils about these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and also in correspondence sent to the school. They spoke to staff and considered responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector spoke to staff in two of the alternative provisions used by the school.

Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Suzette Garland-Grimes

Ofsted Inspector

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