

Rigby Hall Day Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117049
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	338932
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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	4-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carl Taylor-Hall
Headteacher	Cynthia Pitts
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2006
School address	Rigby Lane Astonfields Bromsgrove B60 2EP
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Age group	4-18
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed and 12 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at local authority reports, information about students' progress, staff and student surveys and safeguarding procedures. The inspection team analysed 33 responses to parent and carer questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether each of the different age and ability groups make sufficient progress
- whether teaching and the curriculum meets the needs of these groups particularly in Key Stage 4
- evidence of recent improvement to outcomes and current progress being made.

Information about the school

Rigby Hall caters for students who have statements for a variety of special educational needs. The majority have moderate learning difficulties and a minority have a range of other special educational needs, largely speech, language and communication difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and severe learning difficulties. A high number of students are eligible for free school meals. Most students are from White British backgrounds with a few from a range of other minority ethnic groups. Students come from a wide geographical area. Students enter the school at various times during each key stage, the majority into Key Stages 3 and 4. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Reception group as part of the Key Stage 1 class and usually contains, very few if any children. The sixth form consists of two classes taught in a separate building on the same site. The headteacher has been at the school for less than a year having been appointed in September 2009.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Rigby Hall is a happy, welcoming and purposeful school community where students behave responsibly and enjoy what they do. Students and parents particularly appreciate the safe and caring environment provided by staff. As several students reported, 'This is the best school I've been to.' Students are helped to achieve to a satisfactory level in their subjects and courses largely because teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory overall. Their progress is satisfactory in the key skills of literacy and numeracy and students leave the sixth form with a range of suitable qualifications and good preparation for basic life skills. Progress is satisfactory regardless of the nature of students' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good as teaching and the curriculum are adapted well to meet their very particular needs.

Teaching is now improved, although in a few lessons, particularly within Key Stage 4, teaching and learning are still not always adequate in helping all students to learn quickly enough. In these lessons teacher expectations are not sufficiently high, the work lacks challenge for some and enjoyment is low. The reason for this is, in part, because assessment throughout the school is not used effectively enough. Sometimes students do not move on to the next level as quickly as they could. Students are not fully aware of the next steps in their learning, which are not clearly laid out. Some students and parents would like to see the system improved; the school fully recognises this and is addressing the issue. There are several strengths in teaching, including very positive relationships which help students to confidently share their ideas and a wide variety of practical activities to bring learning to life.

The satisfactory curriculum is strong in supporting students' practical skills and provides good quality physical education. It is narrow in the range of courses provided for students aged 14-19, particularly with vocational options. The school recognises that a very small number of students are capable of gaining higher qualifications in one or two subjects and is already planning to address this.

The new headteacher has introduced a very thorough system to evaluate the progress of different groups and has accurately identified the school's strengths and shortcomings. Senior staff work well as a team to support school improvement. Plans to improve the school are well thought through and have already led to improvements in teaching and learning where more students are beginning to make good progress, particularly those aged 7 to 11. It is early days and leadership throughout the school is satisfactory in its capacity to improve. Everyone involved

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remains committed to providing the best they can for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all lessons are at least satisfactory and many are good by October 2010 at the very latest through:
 - raising expectations of the levels students can reach
 - ensuring that all lessons and the curriculum are carefully planned to provide sufficient challenge for every student.
- Improve the use of assessment for helping individual pupils move more quickly to the next stage in their learning by:
 - providing easy to see steps in learning for each student in their main subjects
 - keeping students fully aware of these steps so that they know exactly how to move from one level to the next as soon as they are ready
 - using this information to plan lessons which ensure all groups in the class are making sufficient progress.
- Improve the curriculum for students aged 14-19 in order to raise attainment and enjoyment. In particular, plan accreditation and vocational options to meet a wider range of abilities and interests.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most students thoroughly enjoy their learning and approach each task with enthusiasm. A few students in Key Stage 4 are the exception because they do not find their courses sufficiently challenging. Progress is however satisfactory overall for all groups of students and teaching is successful in helping them achieve up to eight Entry level courses as well as courses to increase students' independence for living. Attainment in Entry level qualifications has risen recently due to increased expectations of how well students can achieve. Students make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science overall. In English and mathematics progress for students aged 7-11 is usually good. In one lesson for example students enjoyed a fast paced session finding and reading words with 'oo' and quickly grasped how to read and spell them. Some groups of students do not make enough progress in aspects of mathematics, particularly in measuring things and working with shapes for those aged 5-7 and in number work for those aged 14-16.

Students attend well and are punctual to lessons making the most of their learning time. Students also behave well in lessons, where they work hard and want to do well. They are supportive of one another and unkind behaviour is rare which is why students feel safe at school. Behaviour for some students has improved significantly.

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Students have a satisfactory awareness of how to live in a healthy way and they particularly relish sport and after school activities. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the school and local community eagerly taking on responsibility for example for providing lunch to visitors and acting as play leaders. They are particularly respectful of those who are different to themselves. The school has rightly identified, that not enough opportunities are provided to enable more students to play their part in contributing to how the school is run.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Learning takes place in a safe and supportive atmosphere. Most lessons are characterised by interesting, lively activities to make learning meaningful. A sound knowledge of how to accommodate individual students' specific difficulties is reflected in several specialised curriculum approaches, such as signing for those who find communication difficult. Effective support is provided in lessons for those with significantly different needs, such as pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Links with other agencies to support this work are satisfactory and developing. Students who experience difficulties with behaviour are managed particularly well. The main issue within teaching is that information, about students' levels of attainment, is not used sufficiently well to plan lessons, or to access the full range of suitable courses for students aged 14-19. The steps needed to take learning forward are not laid out clearly enough for students, teachers or parents and carers to see. This is why,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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despite accurate knowledge of individual pupils levels, lessons do not always provide enough challenge to help students to move forward quickly enough. The challenge provided has improved recently but, nevertheless, a very small minority of lessons remain inadequate and some expectations of what students can achieve are still too low. The theme based primary curriculum provides many interesting lessons and activities such as the inspirational Greek day enjoyed by Year 5 students. There is good attention paid to teaching basic skills in all subjects, particularly in developing communication. Although provision is very variable, most students are encouraged to use information and communication technology in a wide variety of situations. Satisfactory guidance ensures that students are carefully prepared for the next stage of their education or future placements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Although leadership overall, including governance is satisfactory, leadership by the headteacher is good. She has moved swiftly and effectively to address shortcomings in several aspects of the school. This work has been well supported by the local authority and governors. Much has been achieved in a short space of time. Assessment of students' progress is more accurate and is being used well to evaluate the work of the school and identify what needs to be improved. This has already been effective in driving improvement; for example teaching and learning have moved from inadequate to broadly satisfactory in just under two terms. In addition, the quality of provision and progress being made in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved significantly. Despite the impact of these changes being at an early stage, the capacity to improve is satisfactory. Staff are committed to continue this work and are beginning to operate more closely as a team to eradicate the remaining areas where practice is inadequate. The school recognises that, although practice is developing, not all leaders are yet sufficiently involved in the work of improving student outcomes.

Satisfactory procedures, to ensure that pupils are safeguarded are in order, are overseen by governors and have been recently reviewed and strengthened. The way community cohesion is promoted is satisfactory. It is strong within the school community and increasingly locally, but links to allow students more direct experience of cultures and beliefs nationally and internationally are underdeveloped. The school ensures satisfactory equal opportunities for every student and there is no evidence of any discrimination.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

At the time of the inspection there was only one child in Reception learning alongside others from Year 1. This youngest class receives a curriculum designed for the Early Years Foundation Stage and in that respect it is wholly suitable for any Reception aged children. Thorough and improving assessment ensures that each child’s learning is taken forward at a suitable pace and so progress in each of the areas of learning is now good, particularly in communication, personal and social development and numeracy skills. Skilled intervention, as children explore things for themselves, is leading to improved confidence and increased understanding of language. The class was full of active, happy children confidently learning how to use computers, role playing at being doctors or shopkeepers for example or sorting currant buns. Free access to a well organised outside area ensured that children were able to fruitfully investigate the current farmyard topic and ‘fish’ from a small ‘pond’. This area is very small and the school is intending to develop outside provision further. Regular teacher led, individual sessions, adapted to help those with autistic spectrum disorders and other difficulties, are skilled and effective. The Reception leader has improved provision from inadequate to good since September demonstrating good and improving understanding of how to ensure that this stage of education is effective.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

The sixth form is satisfactory in supporting students to achieve appropriate qualifications and prepare themselves for the future. Progress is satisfactory overall, although for some students progress and achievement are good, especially in developing social skills and in understanding of how to lead more independent lives. For example, students clearly enjoy learning how to travel on trains, cook healthy food for themselves and use computers. Students run mini-enterprises and are keenly aware of safety procedures when out at college or in the workplace. They achieve a range of broadly suitable qualifications, through satisfactory and sometimes good teaching. The use of assessment however, to ensure each one makes maximum progress and to guide them in their choices, is not well developed and a few, occasionally, could achieve more. This is why the curriculum does not provide all students with a sufficiently wide choice of courses related to their particular interests and skills. Students participate in the school’s council, but their contribution to, and involvement in the rest of the school community, for example by helping younger students and acting as leaders, is underdeveloped. Relationships are very strong and students behave in a responsible and mature manner. Satisfactory leadership and care ensures a welcoming and safe environment. Strong links with work providers and college effectively enhances what is offered. Sixth form leadership is committed to improving provision and, through recently effective self-evaluation, fully understands what needs to be improved.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who completed the questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. They particularly appreciate how their children are kept safe, how well they are informed of their children’s progress, the support to encourage healthy living and the fact that their children’s needs are met. As one reported, ‘the school is like a family and the pupils seem so happy, friendly and confident being there.’ Experiences are mixed and a very few concerns were expressed, largely about not knowing how to support their children’s learning and whether enough progress is being made. The findings regarding these concerns are

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reflected in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rigby Hall Day Special School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 109 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	55	13	39	1	3	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	21	64	11	33	0	0	1	3
The school informs me about my child’s progress	16	48	17	52	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	45	16	48	0	0	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	13	39	18	55	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	9	27	20	61	3	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	45	17	52	1	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	24	21	64	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	55	14	42	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	48	13	39	2	6	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	36	18	55	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	27	20	61	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	16	48	14	42	1	3	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.

25 March 2010

Dear Students



Inspection of Rigby Hall Day Special School, Bromsgrove, B60 2EP

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons. Your school is a satisfactory and improving school, with many interesting things going on, just as you described. Senior staff work hard to keep developing the school and this is an important reason why your work is getting better.

Interesting teaching, with many practical activities, help you to make satisfactory progress in your lessons. We like the way most of you really enjoy your lessons and always try to do your best. You told us that the progress you make is sometimes too slow, because in a few lessons teaching and courses do not challenge you and do not meet all of your needs. For this reason we have asked your school to improve the way your targets are set and used, by:

- giving you an easy-to-understand, clear set of steps, towards reaching the next level in your work, which are changed as soon as they are reached and help you in your main subjects
- making sure all lessons help each one of you to work at a level which challenges you and helps you to make more progress
- providing courses and qualifications which give you more choice and allow some of you to work at higher levels .

We are sure that you will discuss these ideas with your teachers and help them by working hard and sharing your thoughts and opinions.

The responsibilities that you take on are heartening, for example, the way some of you lead activities at lunchtime or cook lunch for visitors. You were keen to tell us that the school keeps you safe and looks after you well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by behaving well and considering others in lessons, during breaks and out at college or on work placements. You show good respect and understanding towards those who have different beliefs and ways of living, which helps make your school a happy and welcoming community.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Potheary
Lead inspector

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