

# Inspection of Rowden House School

Rowden House, Winslow, Bromyard HR7 4LS

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Inspection dates: 1 to 3 July 2025

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Rowden House School is a magical place to learn. Leaders and the proprietor have set high expectations for themselves, their staff and their pupils. All staff are committed to helping pupils succeed. The bespoke curriculums for every pupil are exceptionally successful in making these aims a reality.

All pupils have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Almost all have previously been out of education for a long time. Leaders make decisions in the best interest of all pupils. Staff want pupils to achieve their personal potential, and they consistently do. Pupils love their school, do well and flourish here.

Care, nurture and a passion for learning live at this school. Leaders focus on pupils' well-being and ensuring pupils are able and ready to learn. The programme to promote pupils' personal and character development is highly effective. As a result, pupils learn to work alongside others and actively engage in their education. Through the excellent extra-curricular offer, pupils learn valuable, independent life skills. They are exceptionally well prepared for adulthood.

The school is a calm, positive and orderly environment. The purposeful, supportive and positive relationships between staff and pupils are joyous. All at the school describe Rowden House as a family.

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

The curriculum offer is exceptional. As one teacher said, 'All of our pupils are capable of and will make progress.' Staff quickly and skilfully get to know every pupil and tailor the care and learning to the pupils' individual needs and difficulties. This means that pupils receive highly effective support to take part in learning actively. For some pupils and students, this school provides their first positive experience of learning.

The school's curriculum ensures every pupil has their needs met and takes into account individual starting points. For example, for some this might involve mental stimulation, curiosity in the world around them, engagement in tasks or perseverance with activities. Pupils flourish under the highly effective care of staff who work skilfully together to ensure that pupils fulfil their potential.

Staff are experts in ensuring that all interactions are highly purposeful and build up pupils' learning over time. Pupils engage in appropriate activities, working alongside their key worker to tackle the tasks set. Many use alternative forms of communication to demonstrate their understanding. The familiar routine and strong relationships excellently support pupils' achievements.

Staff ensure that pupils have many opportunities to hear nursery rhymes and read books or stories to them. For instance, a story about a worm shapes pupils' outdoor

learning sessions in the woods, which pupils keenly take part in. For those pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read, the chosen programme is highly effective. The school supports pupils very well to improve their reading skills and fluency.

Pupils' and students' behaviour is underpinned by excellent pastoral support and nurturing relationships. The school has a very clear understanding of why pupils and students behave in the way they do. Staff spot immediately if a pupil shows signs of distress or discomfort and act swiftly to mitigate this. Everyone understands the strategies to use with each pupil to help them manage their emotions and feelings. As a result, incidents are often dealt with before they become issues. This work is highly effective and ensures that the school is a calm and purposeful learning environment.

The school's work to develop pupils' mental health and well-being is exceptional. This work includes a plethora of outdoor activities which pupils enjoy. Pupils learn about recognising and responding to emotions and feelings and supporting one another. Pupils learn about fundamental British values well. For example, a class MP is voted for every morning in one group, and they decide who completes what chores for the day. In addition, they learn about healthy relationships in an age- and ability-appropriate way.

Pupils' preparedness for adulthood is excellent. Staff go out of their way to ignite passions and interests in pupils and then support pupils on their pathways where appropriate. For example, one student helps out at a local farm while another helps at reception and in the school's kitchen.

All staff speak highly of the training and support they receive, including for their well-being and workload. They are proud to work at this excellent school. Parents and carers are unanimous in their praise for the school. One spoke for many when they commented that the school had not only changed their child's life but that of the whole family, saying, 'We are no longer alone.'

Leaders and the proprietor body set clear strategy, hold themselves and staff to account and meet their statutory obligations. They accurately identify the school's strengths and what needs to improve. They have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards in a systematic and consistent way. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117042
<b>DfE registration number</b>	884/6006
<b>Local authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10374901
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	24
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	11
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	SENAD Group
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ruth Nolan
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£118,724.26
<b>Telephone number</b>	01885 488096
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.senadgroup.com/rowden">www.senadgroup.com/rowden</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:rowden.info@senadgroup.com">rowden.info@senadgroup.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 to 30 June 2022

## Information about this school

- Rowden House School is an independent special school that caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. Pupils' prime areas of need are cognition and learning and communication and interaction. Most pupils have a diagnosis of autism.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. A range of local authorities place pupils in the school.
- The school is registered to admit up to 48 pupils. Pupils can join the school at different points in the school year.
- The school is in the same grounds as a children's home, which is also owned by the SENAD Group. Most pupils who attend the school reside at the children's home. The children's home is inspected separately.
- The school is surrounded by extensive, picturesque grounds and woodland that are used to support the delivery of the curriculum.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- The school's last full inspection was in June 2022 where it was judged to be good.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, where appropriate, to prepare pupils for adulthood and provide pupils with impartial and meaningful information about possible future career paths.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior teacher. The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the proprietor body. The lead inspector also met with the lead teacher in her capacity as behaviour lead. Meetings were held with other staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, mathematics, physical development and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited classes, spoke to teachers, spoke

to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed school's outdoor education offer.

- Inspectors observed the school's morning handover meeting between care and school staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 and the headteacher toured the school premises to check their suitability.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons and throughout the school days. Inspectors spoke to some of them about their experience at the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records and attendance information.
- The inspectors looked at information published on the school's website.
- Inspectors took account of the parent comments and responses on Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tony Bradshaw

His Majesty's Inspector

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