

Ripplevale School Rochester

9-13 New Road, Rochester, Kent, Rochester, Kent ME1 1BG

Inspection date

4 June 2024

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 3, 3(a), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g) and 3(j).

- These paragraphs of the independent school standards (the standards) were met securely at the last standard inspection in April 2023 and at the school's first progress monitoring inspection in September 2023.
- Across the range of subjects, the curriculum is well constructed. School leaders have set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn within individual subjects and at different stages. The schemes of work in all subjects are coherent. Teachers have clear information about what pupils have learned before and what they will learn next. Where necessary, the curriculum is also sensibly adapted. This ensures that pupils have the tailored help and support to meet their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets.
- Teaching is underpinned by positive working relationships between staff and pupils. Leaders work closely with staff to provide training and develop their knowledge of the school's specialist curriculum. Teachers are supported to help them carefully consider pupils' individual starting points as well as the aspirational outcomes the school wants them to achieve.
- The enthusiasm of the leaders and teachers the inspector spoke to about the school's direction and trajectory is palpable. Staff value the support, training and guidance provided. This is helping them deliver the curriculum well.
- Senior leaders carry out a range of quality assurance activities to ensure that, in each subject, pupils increase their understanding and develop the key knowledge they need to learn well.
- Systems are in place to track and assess pupils' academic and social and emotional development. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' progress and attainment. They use these assessments to inform their teaching and to adapt resources and equipment as required. This helps ensure that pupils access a curriculum which takes account of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and individual starting points.

- All of the standards checked in part 1 continue to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- These standards were met at the last standard inspection and the previous progress monitoring inspection.
- The safeguarding policy complies with current guidance and is also published on the website in accordance with part 6 of the independent school standards. Leaders use regular training and briefings to update staff about safeguarding matters.
- The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks on adults, including agency staff, contains the statutory information required. Key leaders and members of the proprietor body have undertaken safer recruitment training.
- Leaders understand the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with SEND. They have a secure understanding of potential safeguarding risks at the school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe both on and off-line.
- The safety and welfare of pupils remains a high priority for the school. Safeguarding concerns are dealt with quickly. Records for safeguarding are thorough. There is a tenacious approach to following up on concerns and pursuing the best outcomes to keep pupils safe. The school works closely with external agencies, when necessary, to support pupils and their families.
- All relevant standards in part 3 continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) and 34(1)(b)

- At the previous progress monitoring inspection, several senior leaders and the headteacher were new to their roles. They demonstrated the knowledge and capacity to continue driving improvement. However, senior leaders were in the early stages of implementing the school's post-Ofsted action plan, which was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in August 2023. The inspector judged that it was too soon to determine that the previously unmet standards were being met consistently and securely.
- Senior leaders are now well established in their roles and can no longer be considered new to their posts. They demonstrate a robust understanding of the impact of their strategic work and the areas that need to improve further. They check and monitor rigorously the impact of their actions and work well to ensure that all aspects of the post-Ofsted action plan are now securely embedded. Across all areas of their work, leaders have raised ambition for what staff and pupils can achieve.
- The proprietor body and governors visit the school regularly to make sure that all aspects of the standards are met consistently. They monitor and evaluate the impact of the quality of education provided. The proprietor body has supported school leaders to raise academic aspirations for older pupils. For instance, where appropriate, pupils can choose to study a range of formal qualifications, including functional skills, GCSE and A-levels in mathematics.

- The proprietor body has appointed an experienced school improvement advisor. Regular meetings with the external advisor have enabled leaders to bring about rapid and sustained improvements within their areas of responsibility. They have ensured that all aspects of the independent school standards are met consistently. Pupils' welfare and safety remain key priorities in all aspects of the school's work.
- The previously unmet standards in this part are now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	132097
DfE registration number	887/6006
Inspection number	10327868

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

Type of school	All-through special school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	6 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	76
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Simon Coles
Headteacher	Miss Natalie Christie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,450 to £45,000
Telephone number	01634812233
Website	www.ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Email address	office@ripplevaleschoolrochester.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	25 to 27 April 2023

Information about this school

- Ripplevale School Rochester is an independent special school that caters for pupils with autism. Many pupils also have additional SEND, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and speech, language and communication difficulties. All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan.

- The school occupies two different premises, located close to each other on the same road. The 'school' building caters for primary and secondary pupils. The 'college' building caters mainly for post-16 pupils, including those aged 19 to 25.
- The school is governed by a board of directors.
- The school is registered for up to 210 pupils aged between 6 and 25 years of age.
- The school's last standard inspection was in April 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous monitoring inspection in September 2023. The inspector was also asked to take account of a complaint received by the Department for Education (DfE) which related to the quality of education and leadership. The DfE asked the inspector to take account of relevant paragraphs in part 1 of the standards.
- This was the second progress monitoring inspection since the last standard inspection. It was carried out with no notice.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan as a result of non-compliance with the independent school standards identified at the time of the last standard inspection in April 2023. This was evaluated and accepted by the DfE in August 2023. The inspector was asked by the DfE to consider the school's progress towards implementing the action plan.
- A range of documents and policies linked to the DfE's request were scrutinised before and during the inspection. This included the school's curriculum policy, schemes of work, attendance, whistle-blowing and safeguarding policies. The inspector also checked the single central record.
- The inspector met with the headteacher to review the curriculum in history, mathematics, personal, social and health education and art. She also carried out lesson visits with the headteacher and a work scrutiny of pupils' books. The inspector met with pupils to gather their views of the school and discuss their work. The inspector held a discussion with a group of staff. She also met formally with a separate group of key stage 5 and college students.
- The inspector held a range of meetings. These included with the headteacher and other senior leaders. A meeting was also held with the designated safeguarding leader.
- The inspector met online with the chief operating officer, a representative of the proprietor body and the compliance and the finance director for Cavendish Education Ltd.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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