

Inspection of Ripplevale School

Chapel Lane, Ripple, Deal, Kent CT14 8JG

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at Ripplevale. Most pupils successfully leave at the age of 18 and go on to further education. Primary-age pupils benefit enormously from the care and provision at the Broadstairs site. Throughout the school, committed staff work well to shape pupils' character, behaviours and academic knowledge so they can achieve highly.

The curriculum offers a wealth of personal development opportunities which help pupils develop an understanding of themselves and the world around them. This includes visiting London, travelling on the train and underground, and a charter of 115 experiences on offer for younger pupils.

Staff believe pupils can aim as high as possible, and teachers work closely with the therapy teams to unlock pupils' potential. Pupils accessing post-16 provision are enthused and motivated. They work hard in lessons and enjoy relaxing in the common room.

Across the school, staff support pupils to adopt the right attitudes to learn. Meal times are abuzz with polite pupils selecting their food choices and sitting down to talk to each other. Pupils keenly explain that they are encouraged to be who they are. There is a very inclusive environment where all feel welcome and at home.

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

Parents are unanimous in their praise for Ripplevale. They regard the school as transformative for their children in giving them a bright future. Staff identify each pupil's individual starting point and map out an academic pathway that matches each pupil's goals and aspirations. Pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) are carefully woven into a personalised curriculum for each pupil. The on-site therapy teams work collaboratively with teachers to help pupils work on fundamental skills in order to access their learning with self-belief and resilience.

At the primary school, pupils get off to a flying start. The school building, its learning environment and chosen resources reflect the school's careful consideration of pupils' needs. Acquiring the new Broadstairs site has meant the proprietor body could fulfil its vision of offering high-quality education to its youngest pupils. At the secondary school, pupils have access to facilities that enhance learning. Specialist rooms for construction, cooking and a new multi-use games area for physical activity bring the curriculum to life.

A reading strategy is well embedded in the school. The library areas are meticulously resourced with enough copies of a book to ensure pupils can read their chosen authors. Every day, the school timetable prioritises staff hearing pupils read and pupils having space and time to read independently. The school has adopted a phonics programme and makes sensible adaptations to suit pupils' needs. At the primary school, staff are well trained in knowing how to teach pupils to read and

spell using their phonics. However, at key stage 3, provision for pupils learning to read is not as strong. This is because pupils do not currently have the appropriate time and support to ensure they get the practice they need.

The curriculum is broad and varied with pupils learning key knowledge and skills that aligns with the national curriculum. As pupils move through the school, the curriculum outlines a sequence of knowledge that will help pupils to know more and do more. But, within some subjects, this lacks clarity. Staff can interpret what they teach now and next differently. Furthermore, pupils can complete work which does not closely align to what they need to learn. Consequently, pupils do not learn as much as they could.

Secondary-age pupils can select a number of pathways to help them achieve the most appropriate qualifications. Staff support pupils very well in preparing for examinations at the end of their studies. Post-16 provision is ambitious and smartly tailored to each student's academic and vocational options. This includes guidance about college, apprenticeships and university applications.

Staff carefully present and explain new knowledge to pupils. The small class sizes allow pupils to work at a pace that helps them. There are regular opportunities for teachers to ask questions that help pupils practise new words and remember what they learned in previous lessons.

Adults instil routines that help pupils do the right thing and act with greater independence. Staff are skilled in understanding pupils' emotions and communication needs. There is diligent transition planning to help pupils move from primary to secondary and for students leaving school in Year 13. Currently, many pupils join in Year 7. Staff, therefore, spend time helping new pupils follow the school rules and learn to regulate their emotions and behaviour.

The personal development of pupils is at the centre of all the school does to prepare pupils for success. Diversity is actively promoted through books and the curriculum. Pupils learn about healthy relationships through an appropriate relationships and sex education programme. Pupils receive informative and relevant careers education. The school provides pupils with many experiences of the workplace and independent living. It immerses pupils into the local community. Students in post-16 provision access a local leisure centre for swimming and the gym which helps them be confident in public places.

The proprietor body is knowledgeable and experienced in leading independent special schools. It rigorously ensures the school is compliant with the independent school standards (the standards) and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders within the school keep a close eye on pupils' welfare and academic progress. However, the monitoring of the quality of education does not identify all areas to improve. This means the school is not always able to assure themselves that strong practice is consistently embedded across all classes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In the curriculum, there is not always enough precision in the identification and sequencing of knowledge that pupils need to learn. This means pupils do not always complete activities that help them to learn the right knowledge. The school needs to define the curriculum across different subjects and pathways so that knowledge steps are clear and build cumulatively through the primary and secondary phases.
- The quality of education is not always connected carefully between the primary and secondary phases. This has led to some inconsistencies in overall quality and how the curriculum successfully builds on what comes before. The school needs to ensure that there is greater connectivity across both separate school sites so that pupils consistently benefit from the school's ambitious curriculum.

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

Unique reference number	118995
DfE registration number	886/6047
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10299163
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	6 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	24
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Group
Chair	Simon Coles
Headteacher	Jane Norris (Executive Headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,484 to £72,027
Telephone number	01304 373 866
Website	www.ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Email address	info@ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 February 2020

Information about this school

- Ripplevale School is an all-through independent special school. The secondary site, including post-16 provision, operates at its registered address. Ripplevale opened its new primary school site, 57 Gladstone Road, Broadstairs, CT10 2HY, in September 2022. This followed a material change inspection in July 2022. It is approximately 16 miles between the lower and upper school campuses.
- The school caters for pupils who have autism. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The executive headteacher also oversees Ripplevale Rochester, which is the other school under the Ripplevale name. It has a separate registration with the Department for Education. The proprietor body, Cavendish Education Group, oversees both registered schools. It runs 11 schools nationally. Some of these schools are inspected under the Independent Schools Inspectorate.
- 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.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 executive headteacher, other senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector held a telephone call with the chair of the proprietor body, who is the chief executive.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading and English, mathematics, science and physical education. To do this, they met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- 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 talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors visited both school sites in Deal and Broadstairs to look at the quality of provision for pupils. The lead inspector toured the school sites to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Graham Chisnell

Ofsted Inspector

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