

# Samuel Rhodes MLD School

11 Highbury New Park, Islington, London, N5 2EG

**Inspection dates** 5–6 December 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make outstanding progress across the school, particularly in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. This is as a result of daily morning key skills lessons, as well as formal English and mathematics lessons throughout the week.
- The proportion of pupils achieving nationally recognised qualifications is improving year on year.
- Because of a sustained focus on improvement by the senior leaders and governors, pupils' achievement and the proportion of good or better teaching have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers plan their work effectively to ensure pupils' learning needs and individual targets are fully met.
- Highly effective class management by staff means pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent in lessons and around the buildings. Learning is rarely disrupted because of disruptive behaviour.
- In the school's surveys of their views, almost all parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils also told the inspectors that the school deals effectively with any of their concerns.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team provide outstanding leadership of the school, ensuring it meets fully its vision of providing a safe and creative learning environment where pupils can enjoy, learn and achieve.
- There are excellent arrangements for regular reviews of staff performance and the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully.
- Fellow professionals speak highly of the impact of the school's outreach service in the local authority.
- The governing body is highly effective in its role as a supportive and 'critical friend' of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed nine lessons, seeing nine teachers. Four of the lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with small groups of pupils at both of the school’s sites. Meetings were also held with the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and with the local authority’s Director of Schools and the Head of School Improvement. In addition, a telephone conversation was held with the governor with responsibility for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector took account of the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the results of the school’s own regular parental surveys.
- The inspectors observed the school’s practice and looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning. They also considered the school’s data on pupils’ progress, documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school’s work, governing body documentation and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

James Bowden, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Peter Barnes

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Samuel Rhodes provides education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Since the previous inspection, there has been an increase in the number of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties, including a minority with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is on two sites, one mile apart. The primary site is co-located on the third floor of a local mainstream primary school and the secondary school building is co-located to a mainstream secondary school, with shared dining and sports facilities.
- The school provides an outreach service for mainstream schools within the local authority.
- Currently, the large majority of pupils are boys of White British heritage. The remainder come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority speak English as an additional language. A few are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium, which provides additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above the national average.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection and there is also a new Chair of the Governing Body.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the effectiveness of adults, other than teachers, working in the classroom in order to provide increased opportunities for students to learn independently.
- Increase the proportion of students in the school who make rapid progress and reach high standards by the time they leave school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- As a result of their moderate learning difficulties and other special needs, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that in mainstream schools. The focus on improving communication skills in the primary section allows all to follow the National Curriculum. Although attainment remains below that found nationally in mainstream schools at the end of Year 11, pupils achieve outstandingly well in relation to their starting points.
- Daily literacy and numeracy lessons each morning are not only highly effective in supporting pupils' progress in English and mathematics but also across all subjects. Significant strides are made in improving reading because all pupils have improved their ability to 'sound out' letters and groups of letters when dealing with difficult and/or new words. This improves their confidence in learning in all subjects.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education, all moving on to further education, employment or work-based training. Over the last three years, pupils' rates of progress have improved significantly, which has resulted in high levels of achievement in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) from their starting points. Additional courses provided since the last inspection have resulted in an increase in the range of nationally recognised qualifications achieved by pupils.
- There are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by boys or girls, different ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language or those supported by pupil premium funding. In each case the school closes the gaps significantly for these pupils.
- The school's accurate and detailed records are effective in supporting pupils' learning and confirm that they make excellent progress over time. Each pupil has clear and achievable individual targets set, which are reviewed regularly in order to assess the progress being made towards them and to decide if any extra support is required.
- In a primary literacy focused lesson, younger pupils were improving their language skills exceptionally well in describing how objects were linked. In addition, there was a sharp focus on improving pupils' social skills, through taking turns and listening to one another.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- A significant strength of the teaching is the daily literacy and numeracy lessons, particularly as not all teachers are English or mathematics specialists. The teaching in these basic skills has been very effective over time and has improved this aspect of pupils' progress extremely well. In addition, a teacher-led daily 15 minute reading session at the end of the morning in the secondary school contributed very well to aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers know their pupils well and, as a result of careful checking of pupils' progress over time, ensure they plan work that offers suitable challenge to all. Where appropriate, targeted extra support from other adults is also provided in lessons. In a secondary science lesson, for example, this was highly effective in enabling each pupil to safely test for and to work out the 'pH' scales of a range of chemical products found in their houses. Both the teacher and the other adult supporting in this lesson moved around to good affect questioning pupils' understanding and checking on their progress. By the end of the lesson all pupils had a secure grasp of how to carry out this test and recognised why the different products had different 'pH' values.
- At the start of lessons, teachers routinely recap on previous learning and make sure pupils understand what is expected of them by the end. In literacy lessons, for example, teachers make sure pupils consolidate their knowledge and understanding of how sounds correlate with letters or groups of letters in order to help them further improve their reading. This then improves their confidence when asked to read aloud to the class.
- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. However,

senior leaders are aware that there are some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of support from other adults who support teachers in lessons, for example in encouraging pupils to be more independent in their learning.

- Older pupils told the lead inspector that one of the best things about the school was the teaching because it helped them learn and move on.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils respond excellently to the school's routines, particularly on arrival and departure, as well as during lunchtimes and lesson changeover time. In the secondary school, for example, pupils queue sensibly to collect their food and chat socially to one another in small groups. In both schools, pupils were friendly and courteous and made the inspectors feel welcome.
- Unauthorised absence is very low, which reflects pupils' enjoyment of their education. Behaviour over time has improved significantly. There have been no recent permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions in relation to the number of pupils involved have fallen. The number of recorded 'serious' behaviour incidents has also declined considerably.
- The school takes all necessary steps to ensure pupils are safe. Each pupil's behaviour is carefully tracked and individual cases are reviewed regularly. When appropriate, behaviour management plans and individual risk assessments are used and are highly effective in managing pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally excellent because teachers enliven learning with a variety of well-chosen activities and tasks, including the use of ICT resources. Where frustrations arise, teachers deal with pupils in a calm and purposeful way, thus ensuring the learning of others is not disrupted.
- In lessons seen, there were no incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils work well as individuals and in small groups, all collaborating well with the adults in the room. In a secondary school numeracy lesson, pupils listened to one another recite their three times table as well as testing one another as pairs. At the end the whole group came together to play a 'pass the ball' game to further consolidate their learning.
- Almost all parents and carers who responded to the school's latest survey agreed that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils too feel they are safe, younger pupils telling the team inspector that they enjoyed coming to school and that they felt the school cared for them.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The headteacher's drive and ambition have led to continuing and sustained improvement, building further on the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Senior leaders and other staff want the best outcomes possible for all pupils. Checking on the quality of teaching and data about pupils' progress is a high priority and helps the headteacher recommend whether teachers should be paid more. Immediate action is taken to deal with any areas identified for improvement.
- All staff and governors are involved in evaluating the school's effectiveness and there are regular surveys of parents' and carers' views. Self-evaluation is accurate and supports action planning for further improvements, including raising the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards when leaving school.
- As a result of the school's commitment to equality, all groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, make outstanding progress in both their academic and personal development.
- The curriculum, mirroring that found in mainstream schools, is planned and taught highly effectively to make sure the needs of all pupils are fully met. The key strength is the added focus to improve pupils' progress in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. In addition, it is

highly effective in supporting all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The local authority knows the school well and has high regard for its outreach service. It provides a light touch but effective support, enabling the school to sustain its capacity for continuing improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has now become highly effective in its role as a supportive and critical friend of the school. It is effective in holding leaders to account for the school's performance and pupils' achievements. It rigorously checks the performance of the headteacher, including how well staff performance is monitored and related to pay and promotion. In addition, it makes sure statutory requirements are met and safeguarding procedures are fully in place. The finance committee oversees the allocation and use of pupil premium. Currently, most of this money pays for a home-school support worker, which has improved attendance and involvement of parents and carers in their children's education. Extra support is also provided for pupils in school. As a result of this support, pupils' entitled to the pupil premium are now making outstanding progress and closing gaps with all pupils nationally.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100469
<b>Local authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	400414

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	89
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tim Attwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Keylock
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12–13 October 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 77047494
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