

Rutherford School

1a Melville Avenue, South Croydon, CR2 7HZ

Inspection dates 7–9 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher who provides insightful and highly effective leadership to the school's teachers, therapists, nurses, support staff and pupils. This has resulted in the development of an outstanding and innovative range of learning activities carried out by a dedicated and very able staff team.
- Teachers, therapists and assistants have high expectations for pupils to make the most of their potential. They know each pupil's level of skill and ability very well and use this to great effect when they plan learning activities. They monitor and analyse pupils' achievements in painstaking detail.
- Pupils achieve outstandingly well. Whenever their disabilities and their medical conditions allow, they show enthusiasm and eagerness to learn. A strong focus on developing communication skills and building awareness of number enables all pupils to make impressive gains in English and mathematics.
- Arrangements for the small number of sixth form students ensure that they make good progress with all aspects of their learning, including their social development.
- Pupils behave very well in school. They try as hard as they are able to take part actively in all their learning activities. Staff members help them to manage their behaviour exceptionally well. Highly effective behaviour planning enables staff from all disciplines to monitor pupils' behaviour and to make early interventions when necessary. As a result, pupils learn to regulate any unsettled behaviour. Very positive attitudes help them to make excellent progress in their learning.
- Policies and procedures to keep pupils safe and secure are rigorously monitored and implemented. As a result, pupils feel safe. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop self-confidence and self-awareness.
- Since the last inspection, governors have strengthened and improved their ability to support the school leaders and to hold them to account. They have ensured that the highest standards of teaching and learning are maintained and that the overall effectiveness of the school remains outstanding, as it was at the last full inspection.
- They use effective systems to monitor all aspects of the school's provision, and as a result, all of the Independent School Standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- The inspector observed a wide range of learning activities in the school. This included five class lessons as well as therapy sessions held with individuals and groups. He conducted a learning walk to see the facilities for therapy. Most of the inspector's lesson observations were carried out jointly with the school's senior teaching mentor.
- The inspector used communication aids and the assistance of school staff to gain the views of pupils. He held meetings with the headteacher, the chair and deputy chair of governors and the proprietor's director of services. He met with senior staff members, teachers and therapists, and nursing staff.
- He looked at documentation including policy statements, schemes of work, teachers' planning and records of staff training and of the progress and achievement of pupils and of students in the sixth form.
- Too few parents and carers had responded to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire for a response to be published. However, the inspector was able to speak to the parents and carers of eight of the pupils at the school.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority that places most of the pupils at the school.
- 34 questionnaire responses from members of staff were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rutherford School is an independent special day school registered for 29 pupils aged from three to 19 years with profound and multiple learning difficulties, complex medical needs, degenerative conditions and sensory impairments.
- The school is part of the Garwood Foundation and opened in 1950. It is situated in a residential area of South Croydon and occupies a building that was originally a large family home that has been significantly extended to include specialist facilities. No use is made of any off-site provision. The school operates a Saturday Club on behalf of its local authority. This is also offered to pupils not on the school roll.
- The school is led by the headteacher with the support of the school manager, the nursing manager and a senior teaching mentor. No formal middle management arrangements exist.
- Currently, 25 pupils are on roll aged from eight to 18 years, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. None is independently mobile and all have limited verbal communication skills. The majority of pupils come from the London Borough of Croydon and a minority are from neighbouring boroughs.
- The school adopts an interdisciplinary approach and aims to enhance every learner's intellectual, physical, emotional and social development. Through this approach it aims to enable pupils to develop their potential and live life to the full.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form provision by ensuring that arrangements for additional social learning opportunities are consistently and effectively implemented.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and his senior team provide highly effective leadership. They have very high expectations for pupils' ability to learn and to develop the skills pupils need to make the most of their capabilities. The entire school community of educators, therapists and nurses responds very well to these expectations and, as a result, the school provides an excellent environment for pupils' learning and development. This enables pupils to make the most of their potential during their time in the school and to gain continuous improvement in their levels of skills and abilities. As a result of this excellent leadership, the school meets all of the Independent School Standards.
- Leaders have very effective processes and systems for making sure they know about all aspects of the school's provision. They listen attentively to the views of parents and carers, local authority representatives and staff members from all disciplines when they plan for improvement. In addition, they pay careful attention to pupils' views. This has resulted in substantial changes taking place in the past two years. These include the arrangement of class groups; social learning groups for sixth form students; the way learning is arranged throughout the school and manner in which pupils' achievements are monitored. All have proved highly effective and have led to improvements in pupils' achievements.
- The headteacher and the school's senior teaching mentor visit lessons and therapy sessions regularly to gauge how well the needs of the pupils are met. Teachers and other staff make very good use of the advice they give. As a result, teaching is continuously improving and pupils develop their skills and abilities very well.
- School leaders ensure that teachers, therapists and teaching assistants have the training and expertise they need. In addition to recruiting well-qualified staff members, they actively promote high-quality professional development. This currently includes relevant special needs education and drama and aqua-therapy.
- Leaders have designed a highly effective and innovative approach to meeting the learning needs of the pupils. It ensures that a wide range of subjects is covered whilst enabling all the pupils to practise and develop their communication skills to the best of their ability. The provision also makes excellent contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is because every learning activity supports and encourages pupils to develop their awareness of themselves and their potential to learn and excel. Fairness and equality are emphasised and very many opportunities are taken to promote social awareness and tolerance. In this way, the learning opportunities pupils take part in throughout all aspects of the school's provision enable them to play as active a part as they are able as young people growing up in modern Britain.
- Leaders provide many opportunities for the older pupils and the sixth form students to experience the world of work and their local community. This supports them very well as they prepare for their next steps when they leave the school. They develop their ability to respond through repeated chances to choose for themselves, to gain confidence and to develop as much independence as they can.
- Leaders have developed an excellent range of procedures to make sure they keep students safe and secure. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that all required actions are carried out in a timely manner. Any risks associated with their medical conditions are carefully assessed and suitable actions taken so that pupils can experience as many learning opportunities as they can. Very effective arrangements ensure that visits away from school are safe and very well managed.
- The school manages the safe recruitment of staff very well. All staff are checked for their suitability to work with children. All the Independent School Standards in relation to safeguarding pupils are met.
- High quality facilities and specialist equipment that are adapted to the individual needs of each of the pupils are available and maintained well. Specialised information and communication technology equipment provides excellent support for the learning of many pupils. Specially designed classrooms provide an excellent learning environment that is uncluttered, even though a large quantity of specialist equipment is available. There is also an extensive range of medical and therapeutic facilities.
- **The governance of the school:**

The arrangements the Garwood Foundation make for the governance of the school have improved substantially in recent years. This has included recruitment of new governors with valuable skills in education and nursing as well as accountancy and human resources. In addition, highly effective training has promoted a strong focus on school improvement.

Governors now carry out regular visits to the school. Together with the informative reports from the headteacher, this enables them to gain a strong understanding of the quality of teaching and students' achievements. They make very good use of this knowledge as they monitor the work of the school

leaders.

Governors provide school leaders with structured and effective support. As a result of this, the school complies with the Independent School Standards, teachers' performance is carefully managed and good teaching and support for pupils' development are suitably rewarded.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They attend as frequently as their medical conditions allow and they engage with their learning activities as enthusiastically as they are able. On occasions, they show visible glee as they successfully control equipment, for example through looking at a specially adapted computer screen, and experience their ability to control their environment.
- The way that the whole staff team helps pupils to manage their behaviour is outstanding. Detailed behaviour planning enables staff to identify early signs of unsettled behaviour and to support pupils with adjustments, for example to their position or with their feeding. This enables some pupils to begin to be able to regulate their own behaviour. Teachers, assistant and therapists have detailed knowledge of pupils' conditions. Their response to unsettled behaviour is seamless and speedy, providing all pupils with the best opportunities to continue to learn and develop their skills.
- A key focus of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is to give them regular chances to experience their ability to choose and to be in control of their environment and the world around them. Because of this, they become self-aware and build their confidence as individuals and as learners. They are helped very effectively to increase their awareness of each other and to experience many aspects of their environment and the local community. This includes meeting the Fire Brigade and responding to traffic signs. They experience democracy in practice through voting for activities and class outing venues.
- Although bullying is unlikely in the school, a carefully thought through strategy ensures that pupils are treated with great respect at all times. In addition, pupils learn to respond to one another well. In this way, they experience an environment where discrimination has no place and where all individuals are equally regarded.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel safe in school. Those who were able to communicate with the inspector during the inspection made this clear and others showed it in the way they responded to their activities and to the staff who support them.
- The school's whole staff team creates a warm working and learning atmosphere in the school. This provides pupils with the security they need for their learning to excel and for them to thrive as individuals.
- The nursing manager and a teacher are the designated lead people for safeguarding and child protection. They have both received the required higher level of training. The headteacher and a senior member of staff are trained in safe recruitment. Valuable staff training in child protection has been delivered to all staff members who have regular opportunities to refresh and deepen their awareness and understanding in this area.
- All the checks that are required to ensure that staff members are suitable to work with children are carried out and recorded clearly in a single register.
- Policies designed to keep pupils safe are robust and consistently well implemented. These include highly effective arrangements to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff, as well as fire safety and first aid. Excellent procedures are carried out extremely well to make sure that pupils are safe when they are away from the school. A very effective policy on the safe use of the internet by staff ensures that pupils and sixth form students are protected from the possibility of harm from the inappropriate use of social media.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers support pupils' learning exceptionally well. Teachers, teaching assistants and therapists have extensive knowledge of pupils' skills and abilities and they use this very well to promote pupils' learning and achievement.
- Teachers use their high levels of skill, in addition to great patience, to support individual pupils to make the most of their potential. They work very well with nursing and therapy colleagues to develop highly

effective targets to enable each individual pupil to develop his or her skills. They design and put into practice very effective learning activities that enable all the pupils to make progress at their own rate as they achieve targets.

- Teachers, along with all staff, have high expectations of pupils. They consistently challenge them to achieve their best. This may be maintaining a skill, for example looking sideways to notice another pupil, or to extend it, for instance, by identifying that pupil from a choice of two photographs. Pupils' achievements are recorded in detail during every learning activity and entered into the electronic programme that tracks and monitors their successes. Teachers use analysis of this information very effectively to ensure they are presenting each pupil with appropriately demanding tasks.
- Teachers plan very effective lessons. They use a wide variety of learning activities that stimulate pupils very well. According to their abilities, pupils will choose, for instance, who they want to greet in the mornings, recognise their name from a choice of two or four, or tally the number of pupils in the class. They may feel the rhythm of drums and soundboards they are lying on or experience the look, smell, feel and taste of all the ingredients for a tasty spring roll. These and many other activities are highly valuable in enabling pupils to develop their awareness of their environment. Through these, they build the skills and abilities they need to experience some control over their lives.
- Teachers deploy their assistants exceptionally well. They ensure they understand the purpose of each learning activity and the individual targets for each pupil. Assistants closely follow the teacher's lead. In addition, the close teamwork in each class enables assistants to take highly valuable initiatives to support individuals' learning very well.
- Pupils benefit from an outstanding range of therapeutic interventions. These include aqua-therapy, which takes place in the school's purpose build pool, and rebound therapy where a trampoline is used. Both help pupils experience their limbs and begin to gain control over them. Music, drama and technology-assisted therapies are highly effective in helping pupils develop individual communication and response skills.
- A very well equipped sensory suite is used to very good effect to support the learning of the many pupils whose disabilities are compounded by a visual impairment. Pupils' responses in all therapies are carefully monitored. This complements the records kept by teaching staff to assess the progress of individual pupils in meeting their targets and building their skills and abilities.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is carefully tracked and monitored in painstaking detail. The record of their progress takes account of their response to a wide range of activities including classroom learning, individual and group therapies, as well as leisure activities in school and on outings. These records show that most pupils make strong progress from their starting points in their learning and personal development. However, the range and extent of pupils' disabilities make it impossible to draw a meaningful comparison to the progress of other pupils nationally.
- Many of the pupils who experience unsettled behaviour make very good progress in understanding and overcoming the causes of their disturbance. In addition, the substantial number of pupils whose time at school is interrupted through illness or surgery also make discernable progress with the development of their skills and abilities.
- Some students achieve the early stages of recognising letters and their linked sounds. Some can accurately choose between words by moving their eyes to the correct one, or by using switches to indicate their understanding. Some of these pupils gain the ability to recognise numbers while they are at school, and a small number can count. All pupils have opportunities to recognise words and numbers every day.
- Pupils' achievements are measured in very small steps. Some of the most able pupils make good progress in the P-levels, and a few make outstanding progress.
- For some pupils, their medical conditions and disabilities have a profound impact on their learning ability. The support that these pupils receive, sometimes over very long periods of time, enables them to make some, although often limited, progress in spite of their regressive conditions.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The school's sixth form provision is good because some arrangements to support the learning and development of students of sixth form age have only recently been introduced. This means that the school has not yet had time to ensure that these new arrangements are consistently effective in meeting

the age-related needs of this group of students.

- For much of their time in school the sixth form students learn in class groups where pupils with a similar range of abilities work together even if they are of different ages. Detailed and careful assessments of what they know and can do are used effectively to ensure that teachers plan learning activities that enable them to improve their skills and abilities. Their achievements are carefully monitored and targets are adjusted as needed to make sure that the students are always challenged to achieve and learn as well as they can.
- Regular opportunities have recently been introduced for sixth form students to join with others of a similar age for social learning activities. These groups specialise in the use of appropriate communication technology and they work on developing self-advocacy skills. In addition, visits to the local community help them to develop their communication and number skills in age-appropriate settings.
- All students in the sixth form make good progress with the development of their skills and they learn to understand the world to the best of their ability. They progress well with their communication and their ability to use number.
- The senior manager coordinates the provision for sixth form students very effectively. The new arrangements make a valuable contribution to the learning and personal development of these students.
- The small number of students who have left the school progress to appropriate long-term residential care.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	101843
Inspection number	462858
DfE registration number	306/6078

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	Independent day special school for pupils with profound and complex multiple learning difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	3
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Garwood Foundation
Chair	Richard Jeffries
Headteacher	Noel Gibb
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 January 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 54,000
Telephone number	0208 688 7560
Email address	enquiries@garwoodfoundation.org.uk

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