

Rainbow School for Children with Autism

Spencer Park, 48 North Side, Wandsworth Common, London SW18 2SL

Inspection dates	21–23 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The chief executive, trustees, governors, heads of school and senior team have taken successful steps to improve the school since the last inspection.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress and achieve well in a range of subjects.
- Staff are well trained to work effectively with pupils with autism and those who show challenging behaviour. They are highly skilled in managing behaviour. As a result, pupils behave extremely well, feel safe and make great strides in their personal development.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They form positive relationships with staff and, as a result of good teaching, they make good progress.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. They gain a good understanding of how people from different cultures contribute to life in modern Britain.
- The sixth form is good. It is well led and provides good teaching that enables students to achieve well. The successful development of their skills for later life and regular work experience prepare students well for their next steps after leaving the school.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and help to ensure pupils and staff are safe.
- Governance is good. Members use their professional skills to the benefit of the school. As a result, they have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Older pupils are not able to study for a wide enough range of accredited courses.
- Teachers have not had long enough to make the best use of the school's new assessment system to improve the teaching as rapidly as possible.
- Children in the early years do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills in the outside area.
- Checks on teaching by leaders do not always show that actions for improvement are clearly agreed, carried out and actions recorded.

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.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' outcomes across the school by ensuring that:
 - teachers make the best use of the school's new assessment system to improve the teaching as rapidly as possible
 - a wider range of academic and work-related accredited courses are offered to older pupils so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education
 - the outside area in the early years department is used more effectively.

- Strengthen leaders' checks on teaching and ensure that ways of improving are agreed and acted upon and that a record of actions is kept.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The chief executive officer, trustees, governors and heads of school have shared a clear vision with all staff, which is to ensure that pupils at Rainbow are helped to achieve their full potential. Leaders have acted decisively to improve provision at the school and have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- During the past year, the senior leadership team has been reorganised. The staffing structure now provides clear information about responsibilities. There are regular line management meetings which are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. These strategies have been successful in improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders are increasingly effective in monitoring the quality of teaching. The two heads of school, well supported by middle leaders, have introduced a rigorous programme of visits to classrooms. As a result, they are now able to pinpoint accurately areas of strength in teaching and those which require further improvement. However, following lesson observations, leaders do not always ensure that actions for improvement are clearly agreed, carried out and recorded. Staff spoke very highly of the quality of training and induction they have received, tailored as it is to their individual needs and stages of their careers. Leaders, trustees and governors ensure that effective systems for managing staff performance are in place.
- In September 2015, leaders introduced a new assessment system that measures pupils' progress in both their academic and personal skills. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed this to be working well and that pupils make good progress from their starting points. Nevertheless, it is too early to judge the full impact of the new assessment arrangements.
- One of the school's key priorities is to develop pupils' communication skills, as many of them do not use spoken language. A variety of systems, such as sign language, are used to enable pupils to study a wide range of subjects. Primary-age pupils are taught national curriculum subjects, under the heading of 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World'. There is a strong emphasis on successfully developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and personal skills.
- Older pupils follow a modified national curriculum programme that is tailored to their individual needs, enthusiasms and ambitions. In addition, they are able to complete units in a work-related qualification which assesses how successfully they are able to apply their literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills in daily life. However, although leaders are currently piloting an externally accredited course in art, the range on offer is too limited.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities has a very positive impact in developing pupils' skills for later life and contributes strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Trips to the shops, local park, horse riding and yoga successfully build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. They have many opportunities to reflect on their learning and how their inner feelings relate to the world around them. Festivals from different religions and cultures are regularly celebrated in the school, such as Eid and Harvest Festival. Inspectors were also shown a film clip of last year's annual Christmas production of 'Joseph', in which every pupil and member of staff took part. In addition, as part of the annual residential trip, pupils visit Tenerife for a week, which successfully broadens their horizons and effectively develops their life skills so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils have a well-rounded appreciation of British institutions and values. They regularly visit places such as 10 Downing Street, the London Aquarium and the Natural History Museum. These visits strongly underpin themes such as democracy, the rule of law, and respect for and tolerance of others, which are covered in personal, social, health and economic education lessons. These activities help to prepare pupils well to become considerate citizens in modern Britain.
- Older pupils are given the opportunity to attend work experience placements, ranging from working in a local café to assisting with administrative tasks in school. Secondary-age pupils receive carefully planned and effective careers advice and guidance. These activities help broaden pupils' understanding about their options in the world of work and their progression into it.
- High levels of staff supervision, around the school site, on trips and visits, at work placements and when attending sport and leisure venues, help to keep pupils safe.
- Since her appointment, the chief executive officer has established stronger links with parents and carers. For example, she has instituted regular 'surgeries' and meetings where parents can share any concerns they may have but also learn about and contribute to the latest developments at the school. This has

considerably strengthened communication links between home and school. The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school to other parents.

- The new school premises at Garratt Lane are more than adequate for the proposed increase in the number of pupils on roll from 68 to 76.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is good. Trustees and governors work closely with leaders to ensure that the school continues to grow and improve. Membership is drawn from a wide field of professional expertise and experience, which includes business, education, finance, governance, law and safeguarding. Governors and trustees are able to challenge senior leaders and hold them to account, and are increasingly confident in interpreting information generated by the school's new assessment system.
 - Trustees and governors monitor the work of the school by visiting classrooms regularly. They feed back their findings to leaders and produce short reports which are discussed by the rest of the governing body. This ensures that they have an accurate view of the school's performance.
 - Trustees and governors effectively oversee the school's system for performance management. They are actively involved in ensuring that any decisions about salary increases for staff are based on secure evidence that is firmly linked to pupils' progress. However, they acknowledge that leaders need to make the best use of information, in order to improve teaching more rapidly to outstanding.
 - Since the last inspection, the chief executive officer, trustees and governors have introduced more rigorous procedures for tackling staff sickness and absence. They have also introduced a number of successful ways of reducing previously high levels of staff turnover.
 - The school's finances are carefully monitored and externally audited to ensure value for money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's systems and procedures to ensure pupils' safety are understood by all staff and work well. There are five members of staff who lead on safeguarding, all of whom have completed the training at the required level. Trustees and governors are also fully committed to ensuring pupils' safety and have completed appropriate training courses, including safer recruitment and the government's 'Prevent' programme.
- The school's safeguarding and child protection policy reflects the Secretary of State's most recent guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (July 2015), and is published on the school's website. It is comprehensive and contains relevant references to, and contact details for, the local authority safeguarding officers. All staff training, including in safeguarding, is up to date.
- Detailed records are maintained of all safeguarding incidents and the school works with appropriate external agencies when the need arises. When staff take pupils off site, they remain in contact with the school via mobile phone so that, if required, assistance can be summoned. Positive and improved lines of communication with parents mean that should any concerns arise about children's welfare, they are dealt with swiftly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is typically good and enables pupils to fill in the gaps in their learning and to acquire new skills. Teaching is not outstanding because teachers have not had sufficient time to make the best use of the new assessment system to improve the teaching as rapidly as possible.
- Teachers' careful planning of stimulating activities ensures that pupils are fully engaged in their learning. Very positive working relationships enable pupils to feel safe and secure in seeking advice and guidance when they need them.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They are taught on a one-to-one basis and, as a result, their progress is carefully monitored throughout the day. Rigorous checks on pupils' attainment on entry to the school enable staff to follow their later progress in detail. Staff make good use of this information on pupils' performance to ensure work is set at the right level, so that it maximises their opportunities to succeed and enjoy learning.
- In all areas of the school visited, levels of staff supervision were high. All pupils are supervised by one designated tutor and some who have very complex needs have two adults working with them. Teachers and tutors work together well to support pupils and set high expectations for their learning.
- Pupils receive regular oral feedback on how well they are doing. Signs, pictures and symbols are used as appropriate to each pupil's level of understanding. Scrutiny of pupils' work and 'evidence files' showed

that teachers' feedback was in line with the school's marking policy, so that pupils are able to improve their work. The school's records give a further insight into pupils' learning by providing photographic and pictorial evidence of their progress.

- Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils understand the expectations of their behaviour and are rewarded for meeting them. Occasional incidents of challenging behaviour are skilfully managed by staff who use effective methods of calming pupils so that they can continue with their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders have established an impressive system to support and record the many specific elements of progress in pupils' personal improvement. These include communication and language, developing independence (for example, washing and feeding) and social development.
- Pupils feel and are safe on both sites. They know how to stay safe online, and that staff are always there to help and care for them. As a result, bullying is very rare.
- Outstandingly warm and respectful relationships between pupils and staff form the basis on which the pupils make good academic progress.
- A rich programme of activities, sports and cultural opportunities ensures that pupils are well prepared for their next steps after leaving the school. These activities contribute strongly to improving pupils' confidence and self-esteem. While there are no recorded incidents of bullying in the school's files, the rare quarrels between pupils are very well documented and rapidly dealt with.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Leaders track incidents of pupils' challenging behaviour with exceptional detail and clarity. As a result, staff are absolutely clear about what may cause individual pupils to become upset or agitated, and they tailor learning activities accordingly to maximise learning.
- Incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with professionally, safely and effectively. The use of physical intervention is closely documented and monitored. Training for staff in all aspects of behaviour management, including physical intervention and safeguarding, is very effective.
- For those pupils who attend training away from the school site, there are effective arrangements for checking their attendance, punctuality, behaviour and safety.
- The vast majority of pupils attend very well. A very few pupils' attendance is affected by necessary medical appointments. Those with attendance that falls below the school's high standards are supported effectively to improve.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils enter the school with significant gaps in their education as a result of their complex needs. Typically, they have very limited language skills. On entry, most children have language skills that are significantly below what is typical for their age.
- On entry to the school, each child's attainment levels are checked over a period of four weeks. The results of these checks are discussed with staff and parents so that a starting point is clearly established. Teachers can then plan activities that are carefully tailored to meet each pupil's needs well.
- The school's information shows that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including literacy, numeracy, science, art, information and communication technology, music and personal, social health and economic education. In some years and groups, the relatively small number of pupils means that data needs to be interpreted with care. However, analysis of the larger groups indicates that boys and girls make good progress, as do those from different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress to their peers. This is due to the individual support, which meets their needs and helps them get back on track with their learning and achieve well.

- Older pupils are successful in gaining units in the personal development programme of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). As a result, they are well prepared for when they enter the next stage of their education.
- Pupils who attend off-site training, in courses such as skiing, horse riding and yoga, make good progress, particularly in their personal skills and self-esteem. Their progress and achievement are carefully checked so that they gain external qualifications.
- The most able pupils make good progress in their literacy and numeracy because of the individualised support they receive and the many opportunities they have to practise these skills in other subjects. The impact of this can be seen for those older pupils who successfully complete units within ASDAN.
- Annual reports to parents about all their children's achievements, including their personal development and academic progress, are very helpful and informative.

Early years provision

is good

- The vision for children in the early years foundation stage was introduced in September 2015 and continues to develop as a new aspect of the school.
- Children get off to a good start as they are very well supported in a stimulating and well-resourced learning environment. The ratio of staff to children is very high. The children seen learning in the early years classroom were happy, safe and making good progress, and as a result are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Leaders have high standards and ensure that assessments of children's progress are accurate. Detailed observations are made of each child's progress in the range of learning areas. This information is shared regularly with parents.
- The variety of learning activities in the early years is rich and exciting, and pitched well to meet the children's needs. Early years leaders know the children extremely well and form excellent relationships.
- Staff are highly alert to children's welfare and all statutory requirements are met, including the independent school standards.
- The limitation of the early years area is the outdoor provision. There is a significant amount of space that is safe and well resourced, but is not used as effectively as it could be. This is because equipment for outdoor learning activities is not set up for the whole day, but has to be cleared away after each session. As a result, time is wasted and children's outdoor learning experiences are restricted.

Sixth form provision

is good

- Sixth form provision was established in September 2014. The expertise of one of the heads of school and his team of behaviour management specialists and occupational and speech therapists has made a strong contribution to the good leadership of the sixth form.
- Students follow a programme that is tailored to their needs and builds on their previous achievements in the school. The practically based personal development curriculum is carefully interwoven with English and mathematics and leads to a work-related qualification. In addition, students have the opportunity to develop new skills in gardening, skiing and using gym equipment at the local leisure centre. However, leaders recognise that the range of accredited courses in the sixth form is too narrow and are currently investigating the possibility of introducing additional courses.
- There is a strong focus on helping students prepare for assisted living. Across the curriculum, students are given strategies to help solve problems they may meet on a day-to-day basis, such as travelling on public transport. In addition, they successfully learn life skills, such as how to wash up, prepare and cook nutritious meals and count their money.
- As a result of good teaching, students make good progress and achieve well. Teachers ensure that each step of the students' learning is carefully planned to help them consolidate new skills and develop their understanding and knowledge.
- The majority of students at Rainbow are 'finding their voice for the first time'. Through 'Pupil voice', leaders have worked effectively to ensure that all students have the opportunity to discuss their feelings, emotions and learning with each other and adults. As a result, students develop very positive attitudes to learning.

- All sixth-form students undertake a half-day work experience placement. They are accompanied by their tutor and undertake activities ranging from photocopying in school to helping out in local charity shops. Effective and impartial one-to-one careers advice is provided for each student. Enterprise weeks and careers fairs prepare students well for leaving school and for the next stage of their lives.
- The sixth-form provision is designed for students to follow over three years. It has only been operating for just under two years and, as a result, no student has left. Nevertheless, leaders have already begun to investigate possible destinations for students who are due to leave the school in 2017.

School details

Unique reference number	134145
Inspection number	10012791
DfE registration number	212/6405

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	Special school for pupils with autism
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	BeyondAutism
Chair	Karen Sorab
Heads of School	David Anthony and Bennie Lesch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,395 to £65,350
Telephone number	020 3031 9700
Website	www.rainbowschool.org.uk
Email address	rainbowschool@beyondautism.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–12 July 2013

Information about this school

- Rainbow School is situated in the London Borough of Wandsworth, in south-west London.
- It opened in 2000, moved to the Spencer Park site in 2002 and was registered in 2003. In 2011, the school opened its secondary department.
- The school is on two sites. The Spencer Park site caters for secondary pupils and the Garratt Lane site for primary.
- Rainbow School is run by [BeyondAutism](http://www.beyondautism.org.uk), a registered charity. The charity provides education, outreach, training and support to children and families affected by autism across the UK and overseas.
- The school is registered to admit up to 64 boys and girls aged between four and 19 years. Currently, there are 68 pupils on roll. Children in the early years provision attend on a full-time basis.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, related to autistic spectrum disorder and related communication needs. Currently, 16 local authorities across London fund the pupils' placements.
- The school does not receive any additional government funding.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, with the largest groups being from Black African, Black Caribbean and Asian backgrounds. There are more boys than girls.

- The school offers a 'structured programme of intensive intervention' based on the principles of a commercial behaviour management programme. This programme focuses primarily on developing functional communication and language acquisition and encompasses social, play and independent skills.
- Off-site training is made available for older pupils to extend their learning experience. Cooking takes place at Lambeth College, gardening at 'Roots and Shoots' in Kennington, the Vauxhall City Farm for horse riding, and the snow centre in Hemel Hempstead for skiing. In addition, swimming lessons take place at Latchmere Leisure Centre and gym sessions at the Wandle Leisure Centre.
- Since the last inspection in July 2013, there have been a number of new appointments. The chief executive officer took up her position in September 2015, two heads of school were appointed in February 2016 and a new chair of governors was appointed in May 2016.
- The school's website meets statutory requirements.
- Pupils are not entered early for examinations.
- The school's vision 'is to empower children and young people with autism to lead fuller lives by providing a life-enhancing education that enables all pupils to achieve their full potential.'

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 19 lessons or parts of lessons, all of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. They held informal discussions with pupils.
- There were 36 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View) and 26 responses to the Ofsted free text service. In addition, inspectors took account of the 77 responses to a questionnaire for members of staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with the heads of school, the chief executive officer, trustees, governors, senior and middle leaders and tutors.
- Inspectors reviewed key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding, and scrutinised pupils' files and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- At the request of the Department for Education, inspectors were asked to consider the school's application for a material change to increase the number of pupils on roll from 68 to 76 and to consider the suitability of the proposed new school premises.

Inspection team

David Scott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
James Waite	Ofsted Inspector

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