

# Samuel Rhodes School

11 Highbury New Park, Islington, London N5 2EG

## Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, supported extremely effectively by the senior team, is relentless in her pursuit to improve pupils' life chances. Samuel Rhodes School provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors challenge leaders effectively and offer the right amount of support to ensure that standards remain high.
- Safeguarding is effective. Strong partnership links with external agencies and parents ensure that pupils' safety is given the highest priority.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Teachers plan engaging and challenging tasks that skilfully match pupils' needs.
- A strong team spirit exists within the school. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' high-quality learning.
- Pupils make at least good and often rapid progress from their low starting points. Aspirational targets and individual learning routes underpin this success.
- The quality of the 16 to 19 study programmes offered to students is outstanding. Work-related experiences and the development of academic skills prepare students extremely well for adulthood and their future careers.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are a real strength of the school. The nurturing and caring ethos promotes all aspects of pupils' well-being and self-belief.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils are respectful towards adults, including visitors, and show high levels of care towards each other. This has an extremely positive impact on pupils' achievements.
- Pupils enjoy school, so the majority of pupils' attendance is improving and unauthorised absences are low. Leaders are effective in tackling the poor attendance of a small proportion of pupils.
- Pupils' progress is tracked using the 'I can' statements that pupils fully understand. Leaders accept that more can be done to ensure that this practice is firmly embedded across all subjects.

## **Full report**

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

- Embed the current effective practice of tracking pupils' progress, across all subjects, as detailed in the school's development plan.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The inspirational headteacher, supported by her committed senior team, prepares pupils successfully for their future lives. Together with governors, they are providing outstanding leadership and maintaining the high-quality education identified at the last inspection.
- Leaders and governors have established a culture of high expectations for all pupils to achieve their potential. They set high, realistic targets to ensure that pupils aim for the very best, given their starting points. All staff share leaders' high aspirations as they work hard to secure strong outcomes. Together, staff support all pupils to develop excellent personal, social and communication skills.
- Leaders are constantly reviewing the school's performance and swiftly make improvements when necessary. The systems and procedures that leaders use to manage the performance of staff are robust. Progress towards teachers' targets is routinely discussed, support is quickly implemented and high standards of teaching are maintained.
- Staff morale is extremely high. Leaders put a strong focus on the health and well-being of staff to ensure that they are ready to deliver high levels of assistance and learning. Staff express their appreciation of the support they receive and are confident in the leadership of the school. Parents and pupils told inspectors that they respect their teachers.
- The emphasis on British values of tolerance, respect for democracy and equality is woven into all aspects of school life. Pupils learn about their rights as citizens, for example by conducting elections for the school council. The strong focus on preparing pupils for adulthood in the light of their specific needs helps them to be ready for life in modern Britain.
- The engaging curriculum is extensive and balanced and provides pupils with rich experiences. Subject leaders tweak learning programmes to suit pupils' needs. Pupils make noticeable gains in reading, communication and mathematics as these are embedded in the various subjects they learn. The curriculum makes excellent arrangements to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, pupils were able to appreciate different cultures by celebrating 'international day'.
- All pupils have equal opportunities to enjoy the rich experiences on offer. Pupils take part in a range of extra-curricular activities to develop essential life skills, including weekly visits to the library and educational trips. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed their trip to the theatre because it helped them develop their drama skills. After-school clubs allow pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to try new activities they might not otherwise do elsewhere.

- Additional funds are used extremely effectively to reduce barriers to learning and promote equality. The pupil premium is used appropriately to maximise the opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. Year 7 catch-up funding provides additional sessions to support pupils with their English and mathematics. Leaders allocate the physical education and sport premium meticulously because they are passionate about the health and well-being of pupils. For instance, pupils have the opportunity to develop their swimming competency.
- School leaders receive effective support to improve the school further, including from the local authority and other schools. The headteacher and the school's effective outreach service support other neighbouring schools, including mainstream providers, by sharing their expertise. The local authority holds school leaders in high regard for their impressive work in the school and beyond.
- School leaders are coping well with the growing proportion of pupils who have complex needs and challenges at the primary school site. For example, pupils have a considerable number of stairs to climb each day and adults manage this admirably and effectively.
- The school has rigorous procedures to ensure that pupils' progress is tracked carefully. This informs the setting of ambitious targets for new learning. Leaders have recently introduced a new system for checking on pupils' progress and this has not had time to be fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum.

### **The governance of the school**

- Governors are highly effective and know the school well. They share the school's vision to enable pupils to be prepared fully for a successful adult life.
- Governors are extremely supportive and hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work.
- The governing body monitors the budget very well. It systematically challenges school leaders so that additional funds, including the pupil premium grant, are spent effectively.
- Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities, and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and constantly reviewed.
- The governing body receives regular reports from the headteacher, including information about attendance. Governors are aware that leaders are effectively tackling the absence of a small number of pupils.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are uncompromising and extremely proactive in their commitment to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding is underpinned by the understanding that all children have the right to be protected and all staff are highly vigilant. Staff receive weekly updates on the protection of children, and pupils attend termly assemblies, which reinforce the importance of keeping safe.
- Strong partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies (including the local

authority children's services) ensure wraparound care for pupils who need it. Leaders follow up referrals to external agencies to ensure that appropriate actions have secured pupils' safety.

- Leaders have undertaken the required checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work in the school. Training for staff is thorough and includes the latest guidance on safeguarding. Staff say that they know what to do should they have a concern, including that associated with child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.
- Safeguarding records are maintained carefully, and reflect multi-agency discussions and actions. Risk assessments are thorough and regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils and staff are kept safe. Leaders meticulously follow up pupils' absences to ensure pupils' safety when they are not in school. Parents are encouraged to inform the school when their child is going to be away; therefore, the number of unauthorised absences is low.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are highly effective and purposeful. Teachers adapt learning to suit pupils' needs because they have a thorough understanding of each pupil and the various ways they learn. They use this information to pitch learning at exactly the right level, enabling pupils to make good and often outstanding progress across a range of subjects. Pupils told inspectors that sometimes the learning is difficult but 'if it was easy then it would be pointless'.
- Teaching promotes high-quality learning that pupils enjoy. Inspiring resources, including multi-sensory approaches, capture pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils make exceptional gains in their knowledge and basic skills. Pupils told inspectors that they like their school because learning is fun.
- The teaching of reading is effective across all key stages. All pupils are given various opportunities to read and to develop their phonics skills. Teachers use an array of resources to help pupils' wider reading, including exploring Shakespeare's poems.
- Teaching assistants and therapists facilitate pupils' learning exceptionally well. Therapists work closely with teaching staff to help them understand the varying complexities of pupils' needs, so that learning can be developed further. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly effective and their very detailed knowledge of pupils' specific needs enables them to provide excellent support to extend pupils' learning. They also strike the right balance when supporting pupils, so that pupils are able to gain essential independent skills when appropriate.
- Teachers have fostered a highly effective learning environment where pupils are comfortable to ask questions about their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of their pupils and consistently encourage pupils to try their very best.
- Learning time is used effectively. Subject content is broken down into manageable tasks so that they match individual pupils' targets or 'I can' statements. Pupils are encouraged to self-evaluate as they are given opportunities to process and reflect on their learning. Leaders accept that this practice is not consistent across all subjects.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school is fully committed to pupils' well-being and this is supported strongly by excellent relationships in the school. The respect that pupils show towards adults, to one another and to visitors exemplifies the caring culture of the school. Parents, staff and pupils told inspectors that 'the school is like one big family'. Through this nurturing ethos, pupils are encouraged to regulate their actions and attitudes in order to become confident, successful learners.
- Leaders have effectively established systems to support pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Strong partnerships with professionals, including student nurses and dance therapists, help pupils to deal with their emotions. The school offers a travel-training programme to support pupils in becoming independent when they are ready. Pupils appreciate the undivided support they receive and told inspectors, 'our teachers are calm and help us when we get angry'.
- Pupils have a firm understanding of staying safe on the internet and the risks involved with gang culture. Pupils have the opportunity to earn reward slips for being safe and sensible in the corridor. Leaders organise workshops for parents, including on e-safety, so they can support their child. Pupils say that they feel safe because teachers are always there to help.
- Bullying is extremely rare at the school. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and they are adamant that it is not a problem because teachers sort it out quickly.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
  - Pupils' conduct and self-discipline are excellent. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are highly positive because they want to achieve. During less formal times, most pupils are engaged fully with the range of activities on offer, for instance football, dodge ball and computing.
  - Pupils flourish in the calm and positive environment provided for them. Pupils value the praise that their efforts bring, including the 'going for gold' points system that rewards their exceptional work. Pupils' self-assurance, 'can do' attitude and pride in their achievements are evident in all aspects of their school life. Incidents of low-level disruption are rare. Pupils told inspectors, 'Everyone is happy, safe and the learning environment is a very special place.'
- The overall attendance of pupils is slightly lower than for mainstream schools

nationally and is in line with that of other special schools. School records illustrate that leaders are doing all they can to support the small number of pupils who are persistently absent. Pupils join the school at various stages of their education and most improve their attendance from that of their previous school. A small proportion of pupils with serious medical and mental health needs find it challenging to attend school regularly. Leaders do all that they can to minimise the absences of pupils with high levels of need.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Pupils across the primary and secondary phases make good or rapid progress from their low starting points. Most pupils make exceptional strides in their knowledge across a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. This is because of excellent teaching.
- Pupils' attainment is well below average when they join the school. Rigorous assessments of their academic, social and emotional starting points inform leaders and teachers about pathways of study. Pupils' personalised programmes are tailored to their individual needs and help pupils make noticeable gains from their different starting points. For instance, some pupils who find it challenging to speak with others are encouraged to communicate effectively.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively. The progress of pupils who attract this funding is moving closer to that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points. Some disadvantaged pupils are making exceptional progress in some subjects, particularly in science and reading.
- Pupils' reading skills are being developed exceptionally well and they are keen to improve these further. Pupils have opportunities to practise their phonics skills on a daily basis. Pupils make significant progress in their reading because they are taught in groups with activities that are well matched to meet their needs. Inspectors witnessed most-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reading at age-related expectations.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. In 2016, pupils at the end of Year 11 achieved a range of vocational qualifications, including in performing arts and cookery, and GCSEs in English and mathematics. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their learning in cooking, drama, and hair and beauty because they achieve well in these subjects. Inspectors agree with this view from scrutiny of pupils' work and visits to lessons.
- In 2016, pupils' attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 was below the national average. Published information of historic pupils' outcomes relate to small numbers of pupils at the end of each key stage. Inspectors gathered information in various forms from all year groups across a wide range of subjects. This evidence showed that all pupils make good or better progress from their low starting points, across the curriculum.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Outstanding

- This is the school's third year of delivering the 16 to 19 study programme, and already it imitates the outstanding standards found elsewhere in the school. Leaders have high expectations for the students and programmes of study are tailored to allow students to achieve extremely well. Students are suitably prepared for adulthood through a combination of accreditations and work-related studies.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Students build on their prior attainment and make rapid progress over time. Students acquire numeracy, literacy and communication skills that are well matched to their needs. For instance, scrutiny of students' work showed progressive learning about managing money, therefore developing essential life skills. A small number of students have successfully moved on to college courses in construction, life skills, and hair and beauty.
- Students receive effective careers guidance through attending a mentoring programme for 14 weeks. During this time, students take part in work placements and gain valuable work experience in their choice of career. The programme has enabled students to grow in confidence and a few students have secured employment. Sixth-form students successfully produced a film encouraging other students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities into the world of work. This promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively.
- The excellent combination of work experience, and academic and vocational accreditations prepares the students extremely well for their future careers. In 2016, sixth-form students achieved BTEC national diplomas in work skills and childcare, entry-level qualifications and GCSEs in English and mathematics, to support their employment choices. A few students have achieved this by attending the co-located mainstream school. Current students are working towards similar courses, including additional qualifications to enhance their personal and social development.
- Rates of retention are very high. Students enjoy their experience in the sixth form because they gain rich experiences and enjoy the nurturing aspect of school life. They are confident, behave maturely and help younger pupils with their learning. Sixth-form students told inspectors, the school makes 'small steps for big jumps for our future'.

## School details

Unique reference number	100469
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10023564

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Attwood
Headteacher	Julie Keylock
Telephone number	0207 7047490
Website	<a href="http://www.samuelrhodes.islington.sch.uk">www.samuelrhodes.islington.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:school@srs.islington.sch.uk">school@srs.islington.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2012

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Samuel Rhodes School caters for pupils and sixth-form students with moderate learning difficulties. Many pupils have additional needs, including autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized community special school for pupils aged

five to 19.

- The school is on two sites, approximately one mile apart. The primary phase is co-located on the top floor of a mainstream primary school. The secondary phase is co-located to a mainstream secondary school, with shared dining and sports facilities.
- The school extended its provision three years ago to include 16 to 19 study programmes.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school operates after-school clubs.
- The school has brokered support through a national schools network and the local authority.
- The headteacher and the school's outreach service provide support to other schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 sessions across all key stages. All visits to classrooms were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with a governor, senior leaders, teachers, including subject leaders, and teaching assistants.
- Discussions were held with parents and a clinical psychologist, and a telephone conversation was held with the vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils, spoke to others informally and examined pupils' books in a wide range of subjects. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan. Records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding were also considered.
- Inspectors spoke to some parents to hear their views of the school. Too few responses were made to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, to be reported on directly. Inspectors considered the findings from a parental survey conducted by the school.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted online staff or pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Rosemarie McCarthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joy Barter	Ofsted Inspector

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