

Rutherford School

1a Melville Avenue, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 7HZ

Inspection dates

3–5 July 2018

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| 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 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, new in post since the previous inspection, leads the school effectively. She has successfully begun to raise professional expectations of all staff, in challenging circumstances. However, her efforts to raise standards and innovate teaching are not fully embedded.
- Parents and carers and placing authorities are generally very positive about the school.
- The school's approach to caring for pupils and developing their personal skills is outstanding. Staff know pupils very well and are committed to improving their lives.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils who are especially vulnerable and unable to verbalise their views are kept as safe as possible. Parents, staff and placing authorities all agree they have no concerns about pupils' safety at the school.
- A range of therapies, including music, drama, physio and aqua, complement the curriculum. These facilitate pupils' progress especially well.
- Teaching is typically good. Consequently, pupils make good progress. However, teaching sometimes lacks sharpness. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching lack rigour, which limits more rapid improvement.
- Leaders are in the process of reviewing their assessment system as it does not sufficiently identify pupils' progress over time.
- All the independent school standards are met. However, leaders and governors do not check that they are compliant with these standards. During the inspection, leaders had to undertake some additional work to meet some of the requirements.

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?

- Ensure that leaders pay more attention to detail, especially in relation to understanding and checking compliance with all the independent school standards.
- Ensure that an effective combination of teacher training, more rigorous monitoring and higher expectations of staff improves the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that the school's system for assessing pupils' progress is fit for purpose by ensuring that it accurately conveys the progress pupils actually make over time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads the school effectively. She has introduced higher standards of professional conduct and higher expectations of staff in general. However, this work is in its early stages and there is much more to do. The quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are no longer outstanding because efforts to innovate, for example, in relation to implementing a more creative and sensory curriculum, are not consistently embedded. Monitoring checks are not rigorous enough in holding teachers to account.
- The overwhelming majority of parents, staff and external professionals spoken to during the inspection were very positive about the school. A common theme was the school's caring approach.
- The curriculum is effective in meeting pupils' profound and multiple learning needs. In addition to the many effective therapies on offer, learning sessions focus on developing pupils' individual targets and enabling pupils to make choices, to express themselves creatively and to develop social awareness. The increasingly sensory curriculum includes dance, massage, art and cooking. Older pupils take responsibility for the tuck shop and attend work-experience sessions, where they help to water the plants and fill up the bird feeders. Use of recorded voice buttons, eye-gaze technology and links with another school all help to enhance the curriculum offer. The curriculum develops pupils' social skills well, and includes opportunities for trips on the local trams, shopping in the markets and visits to the library.
- The school's work to promote equality, British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Assemblies, events and special occasions are common features of the timetable and are enjoyed by pupils. A few recent examples include pupils' re-enactment of the Royal wedding, garden parties, religious festival celebrations, an election for head boy and head girl, and the ever-popular Mother's Day high tea. Pupils help their community by supporting it with cake sales and coffee mornings. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps as they progress through the school.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. However, leaders do not check compliance with these standards. As a result, leaders had to be given time to correct some minor issues during the inspection, such as ensuring website compliance and the accurate recording of all the required information on the school's record of recruitment checks on staff.

Governance

- The governing body meets termly, or more often if required, and provides appropriate support and challenge to the school's headteacher. Governors have a secure knowledge of the school, including in relation to safeguarding, pupils' progress and staff performance, and are fully committed to its long-term development.
- The chair of the governing body is ambitious for the school and, in collaboration with the headteacher, has a clear vision to drive up professional standards more quickly and rigorously, so as to secure a consistent and positive commitment from all staff.

- The governing body has not been checking leaders' knowledge of, and compliance with, all of the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are kept as safe possible as a result of the deeply caring and vigilant culture.
- Parents trust the school to keep their children safe.
- The school's safeguarding leaders are known to all staff and are appropriately trained. Staff at all levels are suitably trained to recognise signs that pupils are at risk and refer their concerns.
- Arrangements for manual handling, intimate care and meeting pupils' medical needs are suitable.
- The school's safeguarding policy is based on the latest statutory guidance and is available on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is generally effective. Lessons consider pupils' individual needs and pupils especially enjoy learning through play, music and art.
- Teachers, therapists, and medical and support staff work collaboratively for the benefit of pupils. The timetabled music and drama therapies, learning sessions in the hydrotherapy pool and lessons for pupils who have visual impairments in the sensory rooms are all especially effective. As a result, pupils make good personal progress over time.
- Teachers skilfully balance the necessary care of pupils with high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils' complex needs are not usually seen as an excuse for lowering expectations of what they are capable of learning.
- However, sometimes lessons do not start on time and valuable learning time is lost waiting for pupils to join the group. This inevitably slows learning. Equally, some opportunities to innovate teaching to make lessons more exciting and creative are being missed, despite the recent training provided.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The effective safeguarding arrangements, and excellent relationships with staff ensure that pupils are as safe as possible in their school. This enables pupils to feel secure and comfortable, and, therefore, ready to learn.
- Pupils' communication skills, social awareness and emotional well-being are developed very effectively. The provision of multiple therapies especially enables pupils to grow in confidence and flourish in their personal skills.

- Although pupils cannot say it, their smiles speak volumes; it is clear that pupils love coming to Rutherford School.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Records of incidents and concerns are effectively used by leaders and staff to review trends over time. Staff then take effective action to tailor support accordingly.
- Training for staff is regular and effective. Adults fully understand pupils' profound and multiple learning difficulties and follow the school's policies and procedures consistently.
- Attendance is contextually very good. Pupils have extremely complex medical needs. Pupils have regular medical appointments and some have to stay for prolonged periods in hospital. As a result, there are high levels of unavoidable authorised absence.
- The school never excludes or sanctions pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Despite the profound nature of pupils' multiple difficulties, and the intensive and complex medical nature of their disabilities, pupils' outcomes are typically good.
- The school's strong multi-disciplinary therapy and medical teams help to ensure that pupils make strong progress in their engagement with education. Pupils' communication skills, emotional well-being and self-esteem improve over time.
- Teachers plan for pupils individually. They identify pupils' learning needs and provide effective teaching that facilitates good progress from very low starting points. Pupils' assessment folders show that pupils make good progress in relation to their individual targets, such as, 'I will touch and explore different textures', 'I will hold up my head for up to five seconds' and, 'I will gain and maintain eye contact for at least three seconds with a familiar adult'. Progress is made in tiny steps, and is recorded, monitored and reviewed well.
- There have been no recent leavers. Pupils typically remain on the school's roll and are well prepared for their next steps as they progress through the school. Some pupils are now approaching age 19. Leaders, staff and parents are concerned about where pupils' complex needs will be met post-19, hence the plan to extend the school's provision to age 25.
- Pupils' progress is captured using various assessment tools, including six-monthly videos, which are given to parents as part of the annual review of their child's education, health and care plan. However, the school has no suitable system for identifying pupils' progress over time.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 101843 |
| DfE registration number | 306/6078 |
| Inspection number | 10048714 |

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.

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| Type of school | Special day school for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties |
| School category | Independent special school |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 21 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | The Garwood Foundation |
| Chair | Richard Jeffries |
| Headteacher | Carole Nicholson |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £56,000 to £66,000 |
| Telephone number | 020 8688 7560 |
| Website | www.rutherfordschool.org.uk |
| Email address | office@garwoodfoundation.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 7–9 July 2015 |

Information about this school

- Rutherford School is an independent special day school in the London Borough of Croydon.
- The proprietorial body is the Garwood Foundation, which consists of a board of trustees. The trustees delegate governance to a governing body.
- The school provides education for up to 28 pupils aged 3 to 19. Pupils have education, health and care plans for their profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- There are no children on roll in early years and very few pupils of primary age.

- The school does not provide separate sixth-form provision. There are a few students of sixth-form age. Following this inspection, leaders intend to apply for a material change to the school's registration agreement with the Department for Education to increase the age range from 3–19 to 3–25.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school's previous inspection was a full standard inspection undertaken by Ofsted in July 2015.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector jointly observed learning throughout the inspection, often alongside the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's information about pupils' progress and attendance.
- The inspector considered the nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also met with two parents.
- The inspector met with the headteacher throughout the inspection. He also met with the chair of the school's proprietorial body and the chair of governors.
- The inspector met with the teaching, support, medical and therapy teams. He also considered the 32 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- The inspector considered the views of representatives from two placing local authorities.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including policies, logs and information related to safeguarding and health and safety. He toured the premises and considered additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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