

Samuel Rhodes MLD School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100469
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	285805
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Collin Whurr
Headteacher	Ms Jackie Blount
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002
School address	Dowrey Street off Richmond Avenue Islington London N1 0HY
Telephone number	020 7837 9075
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Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Samuel Rhodes caters for learners with learning difficulties and a range of additional problems such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Many learners are admitted into Key Stage 2 and 3 and the complexity of new entrants' needs is increasing. The school serves a highly deprived area of London. It offers a support service for cognition and learning to learners in mainstream schools. Approximately two thirds of the learners are boys and nearly half are from ethnic minority groups, predominately Turkish and Somali. Around one third have English as an additional language although none are at an early stage of learning English. In the past year, the school has been accredited with the Healthy Schools award and the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark award at both primary and secondary levels. There are plans to relocate Samuel Rhodes onto separate mainstream primary and secondary sites within three years.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Samuel Rhodes is a good school. It supports the personal and educational needs of each learner very effectively and provides a nurturing environment and suitable, age-appropriate educational experiences. As a result, learners' achievement and personal development are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and they learn to stay safe and healthy and become ready to take their place in society as young adults. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent wrote: 'I was upset that (my child) had to attend a special school but now I am very pleased as she is doing so well.' The school's last inspection judged effectiveness to be satisfactory but fast improving from a previously low base. This was due to the very strong leadership of the (then) relatively new headteacher and senior management team. These senior managers have continued to steer the school forward very effectively and as a result the quality of provision and outcomes for learners are now good.

The school's leaders have an outstanding, clear, well communicated vision for the school. Extensive consultation with staff, learners, parents and other school partners has enabled good plans to be made for the relocation of the school. The opportunities for improved provision, for example in terms of inclusion, accommodation and vocational courses at Key Stage 4 have been clearly identified. Money is being appropriately put aside to enable the developments to be carried out. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are highly supportive, but their role in providing constructive challenge to the school is under-emphasised.

The school's self-evaluation regularly identifies suitable areas for improvement. Some very good developments have been instigated that can be continued after the relocation. Examples of this include a re-written curriculum for literacy and the appointment of a home/school liaison officer to support partnership with parents. During the transition period to relocation, however, some identified aspects for improvement have, appropriately, been placed on hold. For example, the accommodation for learners at Key Stages 3 and 4 is inadequate and restricts aspects of the curriculum such as vocational education and physical education. The school does what it can to compensate for these inadequacies, but is rightly not seeking to improve the current facilities.

The learners clearly enjoy school very much. Their behaviour is good and exclusions are low. While the standards attained by the learners are understandably below expectations for their age, assessment data shows that their progress and achievement are good. Results in externally accredited courses at the end of Key Stage 4 improve year on year. Careful records of each individual's progress are kept and used to inform the targets set on individual education plans (IEPs). However, data are not yet effectively used to gain a more strategic view of achievement throughout the school. Neither is the information used to set whole school targets or to check that learners from different groups such the girls, minority ethnic groups or those with ASD are achieving as well as others. Similarly, although the quality of teaching is regularly monitored, targets for improvement are set for each individual but not for the school as a whole.

Celebration and acknowledgement of its multicultural community is a continuous and normal part of everyday life. Samuel Rhodes continually and successfully seeks opportunities to include learners in mainstream education and community events. College taster courses are well established and the school enters many authority-wide competitions and events. Learners attend mainstream school where possible. The school is becoming increasingly involved in a number of local initiatives such as the Pathfinder Project for Careers Education. Its support

service for learners with difficulties in mainstream schools is well received, and its excellent guide *Effective Inclusion* has been sold all over the country.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school should use the data it collects on performance and other aspects of its work to provide a more strategic view of its effectiveness and to support school improvement.
- The governing body should provide more constructive challenge.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Learners' attainment on entry ranges from very low to broadly average. A good commercial system for assessment has been in place since 2000 and gives clear information on each learner's attainment and progress in core subjects. The information identifies particular strengths and weaknesses and peaks and troughs in individuals' progress over time. These are closely scrutinised for underlying reasons, such as disruption in the family. The data show that learners make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They leave school with accreditation in a number of subjects, and the school topped the local authority's scores for learners' improvement between Key Stages 2 and 4 in 2006. The information is used to set challenging targets on each learner's IEP. Assessments made in subjects of the curriculum show that learners' achievement is good and the information is used effectively for planning and to inform reports to parents.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Learners' personal development and well-being are good overall. Their outstanding spiritual development is evident in the care and compassion they show for one another, their appreciation of music and quiet reflection, and their growing understanding of their own and others' difficulties. Social and moral development are excellent, for example extending to clear views on morality in society such as knife-related crime. The school council has real status. It helps the learners understand the working of a democratic community and enables them to find solutions to school community issues. Learners' cultural development is evident in the harmonious multicultural atmosphere, supported by a continual celebration of cultural diversity. Learners clearly appreciate and enjoy the arts and all opportunities for performance. Relationships in the school are excellent. They are demonstrated in learners' positive attitudes to work and good behaviour. Whilst some have difficulty in managing their own behaviour, most learn to do so with skilled, discreet staff support. Attendance is satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection, but not all parents and learners put attendance as a high enough priority despite the school's efforts. Learners increasingly understand how to lead healthy and safe lives, although a few find it hard to take the right path outside of school time. However, the great majority make a good contribution to the community. They behave extremely well, make good use of facilities and fund-raise for good causes. Work experience helps learners understand about the world of work. Most understand which foods are healthy and many choose sport and outdoor activities as voluntary clubs. A number travel safely, independently, to and from school and on their road bikes. Learners feel safe in school and understand that they should talk to an adult if they are unhappy. The curriculum and good gains in basic skills prepares them well for economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is typically good and as a result learning is good. A small amount of less effective teaching has been identified by the senior managers and is being appropriately challenged and supported. Common strengths in teaching are a detailed knowledge of learners so that their needs are well and consistently addressed. Lessons take good account of the targets set on IEPs and also have subject-based learning objectives that meet each individual's needs. Learning is assessed throughout lessons and teaching adapted accordingly. Teachers use a range of strategies to ensure that learners are engaged in lessons. For example, different challenges that took account of both personality and learning needs were set for each individual in an exciting mathematics lesson at Key Stage 4. Effective lessons make good use of interesting resources, including information and communication technology, and staff use their excellent relationships and a lively approach to engage pupils and help them understand and remember. The teaching assistants' work is variable. In most lessons it is good, and sometimes outstanding. However, occasionally, their input is insufficiently dynamic.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The curriculum for learners' personal development is given equal importance to the academic curriculum. Overall, the curriculum meets the needs and interests of the different age groups very well. The academic curriculum is based on the National Curriculum, adapted to meet the particular needs of the learners, for example by including many 'fun' elements and having a practical basis wherever possible. Accredited courses for 14 - 16 year olds are selected according to their relevance to learners' needs and interests. The school is continually seeking to extend its curriculum, but is currently restricted by the limitations of the building. However, a new curriculum and guidance for literacy is very helpful and appropriate plans are set to develop a similar format for mathematics. A new planning format for topic work at Key Stages 1 and 2 is effective and allows for a creative approach that can be easily adapted to suit both classes and individuals. It provides good parallels with mainstream education which is good preparation for the relocation. Good plans for further development at Key Stages 3 and 4 have also been made. These take in both national developments and the opportunities that will be offered by the relocation. College 'taster' courses and progression routes out of school are well-established. The school provides a good range of curriculum enrichment through visitors, lunchtime and after school activities, residential journeys and community-based events such as visits and sporting competitions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and underpin all aspects of the school's work. The staff are highly committed to supporting learners as individuals, developing their autonomy and promoting their personal development. Learners are given good support and guidance to meet the targets on their IEPs and to manage their own behaviour. This approach, together with excellent relationships, helps them learn effectively and underpins their good achievement. Good transition arrangements are made for learners when they are ready to move on from the school, and they are well prepared for adult life. Parents are highly supportive. The school seeks

their views, acts on comments made and offers them considerable support. Parents are kept well informed about school matters through a range of written and face to face procedures, such as the publication 'Rhodes Ahead', and the door is always open to them. Reports on learners' progress provide a good level of information. The school has good relationships with other agencies and therapists and works well with them to support pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are robust and meet all guidance. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken and adhered to; child protection is very well attended to and the health and safety of learners is given high priority.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity for further improvement. Its inclusion and outreach work is helping the school establish itself as a leader in the field. The vision for the school's development is outstanding and the senior managers have set a very clear direction for the school. They intend that continual school improvement, relocation onto primary and secondary mainstream sites and the achievement of specialist school status for cognition and learning - all within the next three years - will increase school effectiveness to the level of excellence. The school is very aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and self-evaluation is good although improvement would be better underpinned and measured if data analysis were more penetrating. Leadership and management are well distributed throughout the school. The staff are hard working and highly committed to the school's development. Governance is satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met and individually, members have important strengths and bring their own expertise to the governing body. However, collectively, and in relation to the governing body's main responsibilities of providing a firm steer and constructive critical support, not all are at the same point of understanding of how to do this and how to check that the school is working as well as it seems to be. The school's resources are well supplemented by grants and other sources of funding. Finances are very well and creatively used to provide support and interesting developments for the learners whilst also making planned savings to fund the relocation plans.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Samuel Rhodes MLD School, London, N1 0HY

Thank you for welcoming me into your lessons and assembly when I visited your school earlier this week. I came to Samuel Rhodes to see how it was working and how well you were all doing, and I was very pleased with what I found. Samuel Rhodes is a good school, and I know that your parents agree with this.

The headteacher and staff know each one of you very well, and make sure that the education you receive meets your own particular needs. The school is very friendly and supportive, and the relationships you have with staff and with each other are excellent. Your personal development and behaviour are good, as is the teaching. You clearly enjoy lessons very much and make good progress. I was very impressed with the results that you get in your national exams at the end of Year 11. Well done!

The school gives you a good range of interesting things to do, and makes sure you have fun. The staff have wonderful plans for developing your education once you have moved to the new school sites. I understand that you contributed a lot to the consultation process on this; once again, very well done.

There are a couple of things that you should do to make your time at Samuel Rhodes even more productive. The first is to make sure you attend school as much as possible; there is no need to take a whole day off school for a short doctor's appointment! Secondly, it would be good if you could carry on your good behaviour and positive approach to making safe and healthy choices in out-of-school time. You obviously know what to do, so keep it up. I have asked the school staff to look even more closely at your records of progress to make sure that everyone is achieving as much as they possibly can. I have also suggested that members of the governing body ask more questions about the work of the school, since they are responsible for its effectiveness.

I wish you all the best for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Judith Charlesworth Lead Inspector