

Richard Cloudesley PH School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100467
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	301987
Inspection dates	4–5 July 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
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	65
6th form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eve Smith
Headteacher	Ms Anne Corbett
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Golden Lane London EC1Y 0TJ
Telephone number	020 7251 1161
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Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Richard Cloudesley school caters for learners with complex physical disabilities and associated medical problems. The complexity of new admissions' needs is increasing. The majority of learners have significant learning difficulties although a small number are of average ability. Many have periods of serious illness and a number have degenerative conditions and short life expectancy. The school admits learners from several London boroughs and the majority come from families who experience difficulties such as poor housing or social disadvantage. One fifth of the learners is white British, and the rest comes from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The school runs an outreach service for Islington mainstream schools giving advice and guidance on the inclusion of learners with physical disabilities. The school is due to divide into two departments, co-located with mainstream primary and secondary schools on separate sites. The primary department will move in April 2008, and the secondary department in 2010.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Richard Cloudesley is an outstanding school and the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are also outstanding. It was judged to be very good in its previous inspection and has moved forward due to the clear vision set for the school and outstanding leadership and management. Self-evaluation processes are excellent. Consultation is regular and widespread, and deep, thoughtful debate takes place on developments and issues, such as what constitutes 'good' progress in the school's context. The school has identified a number of improvements to make but is too modest about its achievements. However, inspection findings agree with the school that practice to meet the needs of learners with the most extreme needs now needs to be drawn together and embedded.

Development since the previous inspection has been driven by two over-arching factors; first, the need to adapt practice to meet the changing needs of the learners. Secondly, the school has moved to become a more collegiate learning community with all staff taking greater responsibility for the learners' achievement and the everyday life of the school. Professional development has been important in effecting this change. All staff are encouraged to train and take short or extended courses, and are given the opportunity to use their new skills for the benefit of the whole school community. Alongside these developments, curriculum revisions and new systems for assessing and tracking learners' developing skills have been put into place. These have enabled a clearer focus on supporting learning in small steps through better planning.

The quality of provision is underpinned by exceptional team work between school staff and therapists. Together, they provide an outstanding package of education, support, care and guidance. While each adult's contribution is invaluable, it is their combined effort that results in learners' outstanding achievement. Learners are carefully assessed for the resources they need to be comfortable, to communicate and so to learn. Parents are central to this process, and the family's situation, including their first language, is always taken into account in any communication. Learners are expertly supported to achieve the targets set for them. The patience that staff show when helping learners use their communication aids, and the pleasure that the learners show in making their ideas known, are both remarkable.

The curriculum is outstanding in all departments and meets the learners' very diverse needs very well. Enrichment through the use of the community, volunteers, partnerships and other contacts is invaluable in bringing it alive. The quality of teaching is good with support and training in place for members of staff new to the work. Overall, the standards attained are very low for learners' ages. Nonetheless, the strides learners make represent outstanding achievement although this is not always represented in steady progress due to the learners' regressive conditions and intermittent medical difficulties. For example, the small Year 11 group has now sat five GCSEs and are all predicted to get between three and five A* - G grades which is an excellent achievement. Similarly, assessment data show that learners with more complex needs make outstanding progress when measured against other national measures or the targets set for them.

The learners' personal development and well-being are outstanding. It is inextricably linked with the excellent provision and support for both themselves and their families. Parents are highly supportive of the school. Behaviour is excellent and learners' enjoyment is very evident in class and around the school. Attendance is outstanding given the frail condition of so many, because learners are supported to return to school as soon as possible after a period of illness

or hospitalisation. The learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Within the context of their difficulties, learners make safe and healthy choices and develop the skills they need to take their part in society as independent young citizens.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Most, but not all learners move into the sixth form. The outstanding practice of the main school is continued in this group and learners' achievement is excellent. The specialised curriculum and support and guidance are particularly appropriate in developing the learners' autonomy and preparing them for college and adult life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop its systems and practices to provide staff with more advanced tools to plan for and meet the needs of the learners with the most complex needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Attainment on entry to the school ranges from average to very low and overall, standards are very low for learners' ages. However, achievement is outstanding in relation to their starting points and capabilities, when measured against the targets set for them, or nationally used measures such as commercial systems for tracking small steps of progress and GCSEs. Achievement is excellent in the Foundation Stage. The children benefit from the structure, high quality provision and the fun of being at school. They make very rapid progress from their starting points and meet the challenging targets set for them. Parents are highly positive about this department. The school has robust systems for gathering data on learners' performance. The data are compared to determine the achievement of different groups, but this rarely produces significant results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Learners' individual education plans (IEPs) are centred on personal, social and emotional development, and achievement in this area is also assessed in the same way as curriculum subjects. These records show that learners' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Parents agree that learners feel safe and well cared for and enjoy school very much. They confide in adults when necessary, behaviour is excellent and bullying and harassment are very rare. Many learners understand how to make safe and healthy choices, and communicate their decisions and preferences by various means. Learners' enjoyment of school is shown by their positive attitudes. They are cheerful, friendly, hard working participants. The learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their self-esteem develops as they learn to communicate and achieve, and many develop a poignant self-awareness as they come to understand their own difficulties. Social development is high on the school's agenda. It is reinforced throughout the day, and in the many links and opportunities provided for community-involved activities. The learners have increasing control over their lives and decisions about themselves and the school community. The school council is consultative and learners

respond well. Currently, for example, the council is influencing improvements in school meals as a result of a satisfaction survey they have conducted. Learners are prepared very well for taking their place in the community and for leading independent, safe and healthy adult lives, as far as each is able to. The school is racially harmonious and cultural diversity is celebrated. Learners' cultural development is outstanding and reinforced by the school's curriculum and enrichment activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching is good. However, the strength of provision made by the multi-disciplinary staff teams, together with the excellent curriculum, support and guidance means that learning is outstanding. Particular strengths are: an unrelenting focus on communication, supported by a wide range of aids to suit individuals' needs; discreet attention to personal care that intrudes minimally on classroom learning time and which provides extra opportunities for learning; a detailed knowledge of each learner so that their personal learning needs are well planned for and consistently addressed; clear explanations in terms learners understand, with the use of aids, visual prompts and symbols as appropriate; and provision through everything for pupils' autonomy and personal development. Occasionally, teachers do not make the most of every opportunity for learning by using the methodologies typically found in the school. This is fully acknowledged by the school's managers. Appropriate training and support are being given to such staff, who are generally new and inexperienced in working with this group of young people.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage, the main school and the post-16 group each meets the learners' diverse needs and provides a variety of enjoyable activities that support and promote achievement. The curriculum includes all recommended and statutory subjects for each age group, and all abilities are catered for. This is done through the sensitive grouping of learners, and careful planning for individuals' needs. However, the curriculum encompasses much more than academic subjects. Provision for learners' personal development, autonomy and communication is central and pervades all of the school's work. Nevertheless, subject planning is rigorous and allows suitable progression as learners mature. This gives them the opportunity of transferring to, or spending some of their time in mainstream schools. Curriculum enrichment is outstanding. The school enhances and supports the curriculum through a wide range of partnerships and contacts, for example: with schools and colleges to give learners opportunities for inclusion; with volunteers from the Guardian newspaper to help learners develop friendships and links with the world of work; and with arts providers such as the London Symphony Orchestra and the Courtauld Institute.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

This area of provision is outstanding. From their first contact with the school, learners and their families are listened to, given support and treated with dignity. Initial multidisciplinary assessments ensure learners are in a position to achieve and make progress, for example by being given the right support, equipment and communication aids to make themselves understood. The data gathered on individual learners' attainment and progress is used very effectively in planning for learning and the accurate, challenging personal and subject targets that are set in line with their abilities and difficulties. Record keeping is meticulous, and substantial portfolios of each learner's achievement, annotated with comments, photographs and samples of work are built up as evidence of achievement. The school is concerned that current assessment systems, including those produced commercially, do not sufficiently reflect the tiny steps of progress made by learners with the most complex needs. It therefore intends to develop its assessment system further.

The school works closely with medical services, hospitals, social workers and advocates to help learners and parents access additional services. Extra staff are employed to support learners at lunchtime and psychotherapy and play therapy are offered to some who are experiencing emotional difficulties. Transitions at all levels are taken very seriously. The primary and secondary departments are kept very separate to support learners' growing maturity, and learners are well prepared for moving out of school, either on to further education or to other schools. Parents are kept well informed about the learners' progress and school events through a range of written and face to face procedures, translated into other languages as necessary. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. All required checks on staff are rigorously carried out. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken and adhered to, and child protection and the health and safety of learners are very well attended to.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership team, supported very well by the school bursar, is highly effective and has moved the school steadily forward since its previous inspection. The strong emphasis on giving staff responsibility and supporting their professional development means that staff at all levels play an increasingly important part in the school's management. Five teaching assistants, for example, have enhanced responsibilities. A number of teachers and the bursar have undertaken professional development and provide excellent support to staff and the school's systems and practices. The headteacher is clear that this approach will best secure the school's effectiveness. The school is extremely thoughtful and reflective about all it does. Self-evaluation is rigorous and suitable action is taken as a result. Work to promote learners' educational, emotional and personal needs and to empower them to take charge of their lives is of paramount importance and drives all school developments. This promotes the national 'Every Child Matters' agenda very effectively, and has done for many years. Richard Cloudesley is highly inclusive and works hard to give learners equal opportunities for achieving. It also supports their inclusion in mainstream school wherever

possible. Governance is effective. Governors are effectively involved in school life and provide a suitable steer to the direction the school is taking. They offer their time and commitment and have been instrumental in planning and supporting the relocation of the school. Finances are very well used to enhance the school's provision and achieve value for money. The overall clarity of direction that the school is taking, together with the quality of its provision and the opportunities presented by its relocation, indicate an excellent capacity for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
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	1	
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

16 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Richard Cloudesley PH School, London, EC1Y 0TJ

Thank you for welcoming me into your lessons, assembly and school council meeting when I visited your school earlier this week. I would also like to give a special thank you to the chair of the school council who spent time showing me around the newly renovated garden. It was a lovely experience.

I came to Richard Cloudesley to see how it is working and how well you are all doing, and I was very pleased with what I found. Richard Cloudesley is an outstanding school, and from their questionnaire returns, I know that your parents agree with this. The school is exceptionally well led and managed, and all staff have a part to play in helping give you such a high quality of education, support, care and guidance. Staff look after you very well and help you to be comfortable, communicate and learn very effectively. You are very well prepared for your lives after leaving Richard Cloudesley, whether you are transferring to college or on to another school. The teamwork between all the staff members is excellent and makes sure that your learning and personal needs are consistently met.

The school is very friendly and supportive, and the relationships you have with staff and with each other are excellent. The perseverance you show in communicating and putting ideas forward through the use of aids is admirable. Your determination and personal development are outstanding. The school gives you an excellent range of interesting things to do, and makes sure you have fun and make as much use of community resources as possible. You clearly enjoy all that school offers and your achievement is outstanding.

The staff have identified the need to work further on the assessment of those of you who have very complex needs, so that planning for learning can be even better. I agree with this.

Good luck to the primary department for their move next April, and to the secondary and post-16 departments when their turn comes.

Yours faithfully

Judith Charlesworth

Lead inspector