

# Samuel Rhodes MLD School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100469
<b>Local Authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	335548
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynne Kauffman

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Colin Whurr
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jackie Blount
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	11 Highbury New Park Islington London N5 2EG
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 77047490
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<b>Email address</b>	blount.j1@islington.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and external services that support the school, and had a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of pupils' practical and written work, and reviewed data that tracks pupils' performance, the school's development plan, minutes of governors' meetings and reflections on the move to the new school. Parents returned six questionnaires with their views of the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The quality of response from all staff to the previous issue on using the data the school collects on performance and other aspects of its work to provide a strategic view of its effectiveness and to support school improvement.
- Governors' work in challenging the school and being proactive.
- The impact on students and staff of the very recent move to a new school for the secondary department.
- The monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching.
- How effectively the school is meeting its aims to develop a more practical vocational approach in accredited courses.

## Information about the school

Samuel Rhodes School is a school for pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school is designated for moderate learning difficulties. Increasingly pupils with more severe learning difficulties, including many with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, have joined the school. Approximately 50% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are far fewer girls than boys. The school operates on two sites one mile apart. The primary department was co-located on the third floor of a local primary school in 2008. This accommodation is purposefully modified to suit pupils' needs. The secondary department is now relocated and is in a state-of-the-art, two-storey building co-located with a local secondary school. The secondary department is at a very early stage in its development. Students and staff have been working in the school for only four weeks and much of the building and services, such as information and communication technology (ICT), is not fully operational. Both departments at present have very reduced play space, which limits play and exercise. The school has an outreach department that has produced DVDs and published a document entitled 'An Effective Guide to Inclusion' used widely across the local authority. The school recently gained awards such as the Quality Mark in both primary and secondary departments. Samuel Rhodes is a fully Extended School.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The very high quality of the environment in both schools has raised achievement and expectations. The primary department was co-located on the third floor of a multi-storey Victorian building in 2008. Significant refurbishment has had immediate impact. The space is light with bright colours, interesting displays of pupils' work and stimulating social areas. This is the setting for a fun environment, and pupils are happy and excited about their learning. Lack of space restricts the outdoor play for the younger pupils. Pupils' attainment is low in comparison with other pupils of a similar age. However, use of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile with the youngest pupils is enabling their progress to be accurately tracked and supports their move through P levels and towards National Curriculum levels.

The secondary department has been operating for 20 days. The new department's design has a breathtaking impact on all those who visit. Its aim 'to meet the needs of all pupils' is proving to have a very positive impact on learning. Opportunities for learning are extended by incorporating spaces for vocational subjects such as hairdressing and building trades. Despite the upheaval for vulnerable pupils in moving from their old department, they have settled well into their new environment. Pupils' standards are low in comparison with typical expectations for pupils of their age. Using data analysis to plan support and work with professional agencies, pupils now make good progress from their low starting points. Increases in numbers taking appropriate external courses are testament to the department's success in supporting individual needs. An emphasis on basic skills and personal development ensures all pupils can be as independent as possible in their future lives. Most pupils have an understanding of how to remain healthy, keep safe and behave well, and respond very well to the school's ethos of high expectations.

The quality of teaching is good. Effective part-time specialists in art and music therapy pay keen attention to motor skills and creative thinking, which has a good impact on learning. Practical lessons seize pupils' interests; they love to learn by doing. Well-planned lessons have short targets to maintain interest, and give lots of opportunity to share with others what went well or what could be better. The improved assessment systems are beginning to have an impact on learning, but require further refinement to identify and match pupils' increasing complex needs. Teaching assistants in both departments know their pupils well and their support has a major impact on learning. Some teaching assistants would like more clarification of their role.

Basic skills and personal development enriched by music, art, drama and sport form an effective curriculum to support the school motto of 'learning for life'. Cross-curricular links vary in their impact on learning. Community cohesion is an underdeveloped area.

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The school's superb outreach programme and leadership across the local authority in the field of 'effective inclusion' are well regarded; training, support and encouragement are available for other schools.

Excellent quality care, guidance and support are carefully tailored to the meet needs of each pupil. High-calibre links with a range of therapists and health professionals ensure that the pupils and their families receive consistent support. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements; procedures and training in strategies for child protection are secure and regularly reviewed but the practice is better than the policy statement.

Leadership and management display dynamic vision for the future The school's departments are developing purposeful education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and more complex needs, enabling them to reach their full potential when they move into the wider community. The senior leadership's visualisation and passion for an innovative environment and learning with purpose are fulfilled in amazing school buildings, which are bringing out the best in the pupils. The school has a good record of accomplishment for responding to previous recommendations. The revised format for the headteacher's report to governors is involving all stakeholders in the school's development, which, together with the new buildings, gives the school a good capacity for improvement.

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

- To develop a procedure for promoting community cohesion by auditing, monitoring and action planning for the development of this area of the curriculum.
- To enhance the improving assessment and analysis of need by embedding the new assessment process to capitalise on raising attainment.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils' attainment on entry to both primary and secondary departments is low compared with other learners of the same age because of their special educational needs and complex needs. Despite their low starting points, they make good gains in developing their confidence as learners. Pupils participate well in learning activities; in assembly in the primary school, pupils made joyful, thoughtful contributions to the singing as they strived to recall the rhymes they learned earlier in the term; a spiritual experience for all involved. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Most pupils chat readily with visitors and share their views about issues important to them. The school council deliberated long and hard about improving the school's limited outdoor space; eventually three pupils volunteered to lead negotiations with the headteacher.

Attendance has improved and is satisfactory. At present figures are just below the school's target. An exceptionally detailed approach to individualised record of pupils' attendance alerts the attendance team to the need for home visits or parental discussions. Persistent non-attenders, few in number, have significant issues outside school that impact on their attendance. Action to improve attendance is thorough and involves families and external agencies. Relationships between staff and pupils are

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strong. Some pupils with challenging behaviour are well managed by all staff. They use excellent behaviour management strategies to ensure pupils gain from their learning and do not disrupt the learning of others, including the use of the inspired design of internal spaces between classrooms as 'cool down' areas. Pupils from other cultures and those with additional complex special educational need are happy in the school and achieve in similarly to their peers. The school's explicit focus on pupils starting points and appropriate targets for the next, small steps of development ensures equality of opportunity is pivotal to pupils meeting their potential.

Learners respond well to encouragement to maintain a healthy lifestyle in relation to diet, exercise and emotional development. The lunchtime activities such as interactive technology to develop fitness and badminton compensate for the restricted space available for outdoor play. Pupils feel safe and know how to protect themselves during practical work.

Pupils make good contributions to the wider community through fund raising, work experience and community activity in their coursework. Intensive work in the '5 minute box' concentrates on literacy and mathematics across the school, which helps pupils' development of basic skills to enhance their satisfactory understanding of economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy practical lessons where they can see an outcome. For example, at the after-school music club pupils composed their own music and lyrics; the final recording was impressive, illustrating the talents locked inside some pupils' thinking where music becomes the release for those emotions. Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of outstanding teaching. In these lessons careful marking and engaging pupils in discussion about their work impacts on thinking and problem solving. Files are updated often, using photographic illustrations so that pupils can see how they have progressed, and this motivates them to make further improvement. In all lessons, an intense focus on pupils' needs is paramount in the planning. The assessment and tracking of pupils' acquisition of basic skills and personal development is well established and has a significant impact on pupils' progress; this is now being further refined using a new assessment programme. A minority of lessons miss opportunities to consolidate basic skills.

The curriculum is good, because its breadth is well matched to the needs of all. The curriculum design ensures inclusion is central to all planning. Creativity and multi-sensory activities across the primary and secondary department promote pupils' enjoyment and good communication skills. A range of specialists, for example staff leading music and art therapy ensure pupils' individual interests can be harnessed, to raise self esteem and confidence, so improving learning. Basic skills are well taught and are beginning to strengthen across the curriculum. The curriculum gives relevance to everyday skills such as communication, empathy for others and working together, as demonstrated in the school council meeting. Links with the wider community are at an early stage of development because of the short time the new school has been operating. The secondary department's focus on appropriate external accreditation in Years 10 and 11 is promoting equality of access to the next stage of education at college or in training. The new secondary department is set up with a range of exciting vocational spaces; however, the school has not been operating long enough to see the impact of this vision.

High-calibre inclusive care, guidance and support for pupils' complex needs and support for their families are deeply embedded in the school's work. Excellent, cooperative work with the school nurse, speech and language, music and art therapists and a complete range of multiagency staff provides a safety net of care and support for those having difficulty in coping with life at school or home. An example is music and art therapy where enhancing physical and mental responses through rhythm, song and creativity makes a huge impact on understanding, boosts confidence and challenges achievement. The whole school's highly effective approach to inclusion creates a calm, welcoming and reflective atmosphere in areas across both departments.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>2</b>
	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership and management across both departments inclusively inspire all stakeholders to take an active part in planning and making decisions about the school's development. As one staff member expressed, 'This is our school and we love it.' The headteacher's dynamic thinking has taken vision to a new level of expectation and pupils explained how the environment of the new schools has made coming to school much more fun.

Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning ensures staff are constantly reflecting on their own development, in tandem with the most recent therapies and teaching methods, to engage with pupils' increasing complexity of need. The strategic use of data, which was an issue in the previous inspection, has been resolved. Teachers now have information from the data to assist them in raising expectations and setting realistic but challenging targets; this data collection is becoming further refined. Inclusion permeates every area of the school's work, ensuring good equality of opportunity.

The primary department has good links with its partners because they have been established in their new school since 2008; the secondary school are making initial contacts with partners because they have been in operation for 20 days in a new environment; however, responses from local residents and schools are encouraging. Governors are well informed through the headteacher's effective new style of reporting. Governors have improved their active participation in the school's development through auditing their own needs. They have developed a strategic plan to improve their satisfactory leadership. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and good practice was seen during the inspection. The systems are not yet in place to successfully record and plan future action to develop community cohesion.

Effective financial systems support the innovative developments of the school action plan for the future. School leadership at all levels is successfully focused on improvement during a period of complex change.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b> Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	<b>2</b>
	2



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<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

### **Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers respond regularly to questionnaires from the school. The number of questionnaires returned by parents was very low. However, of those returned, the families are pleased with support from the school. Many feel that both departments of the school also support their wider family needs. Response to the Ofsted questionnaire was resoundingly positive. There were only two negative comments from families who felt their child could do better. Inspectors found evidence that all pupils' needs were being met. There are clear routes for parents and carers who wish to communicate with the school. Senior staff are always available to listen to parents' concerns. As well as annual reviews, individual education plans (IEPS) and IEP extras, the school uses text messages to mobile telephones, the website and face-to-face meetings with parents to keep them informed about their child's progress and well-being.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Samuel Rhodes MLD School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received six completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	50	2	33	1	16	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	50	2	33	1	16	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	33	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	33	4	67	0	0	1	16
The school is led and managed effectively	2	33	4	67	1	16	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



9 October 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Samuel Rhodes MLD School, Highbury New Park N5 2EG

I am writing to thank you all very much for making my friends and me so welcome in your school last week. Peter, Ron, Russ and I would like to thank you very much for welcoming us into your new school buildings. We could see how pleased you were to be working in such bright, cheerful areas.

My discussion with the school council in the secondary department and meeting some of you after assembly in the primary department showed how much fun you were having in school and how well you were able to learn. Please thank your parents for filling in the questionnaires. Overall they are very happy with what you are doing at school.

Your teachers, teaching assistants and all support staff in your school are working very hard to get everyone settled. In the primary department you are already enjoying being on the top floor of a big primary school because you get the chance to meet your friends in the rest of the school. I know it is more difficult in the secondary department because you have only just moved from your old school building, and many of you miss the outdoor play space. That should improve as the building work is completed.

We gathered lots of information to show how well you were progressing and we have suggested two ideas for your teachers that will add to the good work you are doing.

- To explore community cohesion to help you make contacts your local, national and worldwide contacts.
- To use the more detailed assessment system to help with planning your learning.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Kauffman

Lead inspector

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