



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Rutherford School
Independent special school
DfES ref no: 306/6078

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 November 2004

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Introduction and summary

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Rutherford School is an independent day school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex medical needs. It is guided by a committee who are answerable to the board of trustees from The Garwood Foundation. The school caters for children aged between 2 and 12 years. There are currently 25 pupils on roll, six of whom have part-time placements. There are eleven boys and eleven girls who attend the school. There are three exceptional placements for pupils who do not physically attend the school but receive outreach support for their education at home. Seven of the younger pupils are currently undergoing statutory assessment of their special educational needs (SEN). All other pupils have a statement of special educational need. The current headteacher has been in post since March 2004 and there is a vacancy for the post of deputy headteacher.

The school is situated in a residential area of South Croydon and occupies a building that was originally a large house. The building has been converted and extended to accommodate teaching, therapy including hydrotherapy, nursing and the administration necessary to run the school successfully. The majority of pupils come from the London Borough of Croydon, but there are four from the neighbouring borough of Sutton.

Rutherford School aims to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum in order to help pupils achieve their potential. Individual programmes are designed to meet the pupils' learning needs and ensure each child has equal access to an education that is challenging. The school aims to celebrate the achievements of each child while promoting their social, spiritual and cultural development as part of the school community. There is an emphasis on good communication with multi-professional teams and with the children's parents.

Summary of main findings

Rutherford School is effective in meeting the particular needs of its pupils. The teaching is at least satisfactory at all times and in nearly half the lessons is good or better. There is a happy and caring ethos based upon good multi-disciplinary team work. The team working of teachers and therapists ensures that satisfactory progress is made by all children. The school provides a stimulating and well-organised learning environment. Both pupils and staff clearly enjoy learning and working at Rutherford. Pupils receive very good support from the dedicated staff team who know their pupils well and plan specific programmes for them. There is insufficient consistency in applying policies and procedures and this is an area identified by the headteacher as needing improvement. A number of policies need to be updated in order for the school to fully comply with the regulations. The staff work in close

partnership with parents, almost all of whom are very pleased with all aspects of the education provided.

What the school does well

- it has a positive ethos and relationships between staff and children are very good;
- the care and well-being of the children is paramount throughout the school day, while dignity and respect are promoted for all individuals;
- staff are extremely skilled at responding to individual pupils' needs and are often very good at interpreting the pupils' individual means of communication;
- the very good and often excellent collaboration of the multi-disciplinary team is evident throughout the school day;
- the learning environment is stimulating and well ordered;
- the development of pupils' personal and social skills is a priority in all activities; and
- the school provides a wide range of opportunities for development in spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- develop curriculum planning in order to ensure the content is appropriate for pupils' ages and provides a progression of experiences as outlined in section 1 of this report;
- comply with all regulations regarding policies on bullying and off-site visits as outlined in section 3 and 6; and
- provide annual accounts of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of individual pupils for the placing local authorities.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve access to the curriculum, premises and information for pupils with disabilities.

Next steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the consistency of communication systems used throughout the school day in order to maximise pupils' progress;
- review policies, systems and structures in place within the school and also ensure consistent implementation; and
- clarify with placing authorities the arrangements for admission and transfer of pupils so that the school remains within its registration criteria.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum organised into six areas; communication; mathematics; personal, social and emotional; physical; creative and knowledge of self and understanding of the world. The latter area encompasses history, geography, science and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum outline is supported by published schemes of work for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The schemes of work are detailed and appropriate for the abilities of the children at the school. However, they do not clearly identify opportunities for progression of experience for the children as they move up through the school. There is little distinction between the content of lessons and resources used for pre-school children and for those that are 12 years old.

The curriculum is delivered using a multi-sensory approach. There is a strong focus on each child as an individual. Teachers, support staff and therapists work together effectively to design and teach programmes which are appropriate for pupil's individual needs. These programmes fulfil the requirements of pupils' statements of SEN. Pupils receive regular, intensive and high quality support from the speech and language therapist, the physiotherapist and music therapist. The multi-disciplinary work is particularly effective in the positioning of children throughout the day and the communication programmes developed for individuals. A non-class-based teacher provides regular individual sessions to develop insights into cause and effect and skills in communication using ICT, the sound beam and other facilities in the light and dark room.

The school effectively identifies the needs of all children when they enrol. Staff draw up individual education plans (IEPs) to address these needs. Sometimes the targets on these plans are too broad and do not take account of the small steps of achievement made by the pupils. The staff work hard to ensure that all pupils have the resources they require to access all areas of the curriculum.

The curriculum policy covers both the receptive and expressive aspects of communication and provides a framework to support progress. Staff are very good at ensuring that they talk to pupils at all times and tell them what is about to happen. However, this process is too reliant on verbal communication. Many staff offer the children choices throughout the school day and respond effectively to eye pointing or reaching, but there is a lack of consistency in the use of alternative communication systems across the school. The pupils do not experience the consistent total communication environment which would maximise their progress.

Personal, social and health education is an integral part of the work undertaken by the pupils and underpins their learning in all contexts. It is well planned and effectively promoted throughout the school day. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently and to work as part of a small group. There is an emphasis on following

routines and establishing turn taking. Independence skills are promoted at snack and meal times and reinforced throughout activities during the school day.

The curriculum is enhanced by regular creative arts days during which a wide range of visiting artists work with all the pupils. The school plans opportunities for its pupils to work alongside pupils from other schools. This provides pupils both with other role models and an opportunity to further develop their social and communication skills. The majority of parents are pleased with the range of activities offered to their children.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and in some lessons there are elements of excellent practice. In the best lessons there is an appropriate pace which maintains the involvement of all pupils and addresses their individual learning needs. In these lessons there is high quality teaching that incorporates strategies from the therapists and as a result progress is good. Where expectations are high there is a good level of challenge for the children and progress is evident.

Teachers ensure that classrooms provide bright and stimulating learning environments. The staff team in each class work together closely and effectively. There is a good balance between individual help and encouraging pupils to have some independence in their learning. In the most effective lessons staff use a consistent approach and routines and expectations are established and consistently reinforced. Staff know their pupils well and have a good understanding of the strategies suitable for particular pupils. All staff have an encouraging, enthusiastic approach and take every opportunity to reinforce the efforts made by the children and react to their responses.

Rewards and praise are meaningful, difficult behaviour is managed effectively and, as a result, pupils behave sensibly and sustain concentration. When pupils are reluctant to become involved in activities the staff provide gentle and sensitive encouragement usually resulting in some form of participation.

In some lessons the degree of challenge could be higher in order to increase progress for some of the pupils. The lack of consistency across the school in communication and expectations does not support teachers in maximising long term progress for some pupils. There are sometimes missed opportunities for building on responses gained from the children. In some lessons the most able children are not always fully challenged by some of the activities, and in some art and creative activities there is too much adult direction. The older pupils would benefit from some more age-appropriate resources which would reflect their levels of ability and provide them with different experiences from those of younger children.

Lessons are well planned and sensitive support is given to pupils. The structure of most lessons is good which means there is a balance between group activity and individual work. Interesting resources are always prepared for lessons and are used effectively to support teaching.

The ongoing assessment of pupils' learning relies on the sensitivity of staff to assess responses and understanding. There is an established system for regularly recording

achievement which enables staff to distinguish between levels of understanding. When used well it provides a clear picture of progress and supports staff in moving pupils' learning on at an appropriate rate. The headteacher is aware that consistency in this area needs to be improved and that a more regular review of progress towards individual targets is required to ensure that learning programmes provide sufficient challenge for the children. The use of photographs and video is effective in demonstrating levels of attainment but this does not show progress over time, as it does not focus consistently on key skills.

All parents and carers are invited to attend meetings to discuss their children's progress. Most parents feel that teaching is good and they are pleased that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress. All parents feel that staff treat pupils with respect.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets nearly all of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with statements (paragraph 1(2)(b)).

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good. The strong emphasis on promoting and preserving the pupils' dignity at all times helps to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence. The pupils are given frequent opportunities to make choices between two or more alternatives. Pupils relate well to adults, both staff and volunteers, and trust them. The sensitive use of praise for hard work and for good behaviour gives them an understanding of right and wrong. This is reinforced by religious education and spiritual awareness days, to which a member of the trustees contributes. The use of the recently developed sensory garden gives pupils an opportunity to experience and appreciate flowers, scent and textures.

The pupils experience a very good range of cultural situations including visits to theatres and music events. The school provides good social opportunities by involving pupils from other schools in special occasions. The photographic evidence in the 'Past Events' book demonstrates the wide variety of such opportunities. Pupils have experience of other cultures, through such events as the topics on cookery from other countries. Respect for religious and cultural backgrounds is promoted through a wide range of books and other multi-cultural resources.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

There is a wide range of policies and procedures to protect and support the pupils' welfare which meet most but not all of the requirements for registration. The school places a very high priority on the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. This very good practice is a strength of the school. The pupils feel safe and are cared for very well. The school's child protection policy complies with regulations. There is very good provision of health support, including nursing, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. The school has an appropriate First Aid policy and ensures that training for named First Aiders is updated. Policies need to be reviewed to incorporate more recent guidance so that they reflect, support and extend the existing good practice.

The school does not have a written policy on the prevention of bullying and of how it would deal with this. While the view is that the nature of the pupils is such that bullying is unlikely to occur and there have been no recorded instances of bullying, it is important that the school is prepared to deal with this, should it occur in the future. Also the school has not set down clear policies and procedures concerning physical intervention, for example to prevent any pupil self-harming and to ensure that such instances are clearly recorded and monitored. The current policy on health and safety on school visits does not include the requirement to undertake a pre-visit and risk assessment. While this is done on some occasions, it needs to be clearly included in the policy and procedures and to take place prior to all such visits.

While there are proposals in the development plan to extend physical access to the building, this is not reflected in a policy for access to the premises, curriculum and information, as required by the Disability Discrimination Act.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most of the requirements for registration

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- produce a written policy to prevent bullying which has regard to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance (paragraph 3(2)(a)); and
- review and revise the existing policy and procedures on the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- ensure that the school has a three year plan in place to improve access to the curriculum, premises and information for pupils with disabilities.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school ensures that members of staff are subject to checking with the Criminal Records Bureau. There are well-established procedures for the recruitment of teachers and other staff. Thorough background checks are carried out before any individual takes up a post in the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is situated in a large three-storey house in a residential street in the outskirts of Croydon. The upper storey is not used by pupils. There are extensive grounds, mainly grassed, together with hard-surfaced areas, including a sensory garden. The building is clean, well-decorated and well-maintained.

The teaching accommodation consists of four rooms which are of sufficient size and are light and airy. There are good arrangements for the storage of the large items of equipment such as standing frames and additional specialised seating. The school has obtained planning permission to extend the accommodation so that all the teaching rooms are on the ground floor and are of suitable size and shape.

The school provides specialised seating and standing equipment for the pupils to spend time out of their wheelchairs. The addition of furniture, such as tables which are height-adjustable, would be of benefit, especially during practical activities such as art and food technology.

Most of the physiotherapy and speech and language therapy takes place in the teaching rooms. There are additional rooms for this to take place on a 1:1 basis when necessary. Good use is made of the well-equipped light and dark room for sensory stimulation work.

There are sufficient toilets and changing facilities. These are used in a manner which ensures the dignity and privacy of the pupils. Additional provision for electric hoists is being made so that pupils are moved for personal care in a manner which ensures the safety of the pupils and staff.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

There are clear policies for working with parents. Established staff have developed a strong partnership with them. The school brochure gives detailed information about the education and welfare of pupils. However, there are no references to the required anti-bullying policy.

Detailed information about pupils' academic achievement and their progress in meeting targets on their IEPs is provided at annual review meetings. Parents, staff, representatives from the local education authority and any other agencies involved with the pupil are invited

to attend these meetings. End-of-year reports are combined with the report for the annual review meeting. The school has a system for planning and organising the annual review meeting. However, over the past two years not all review meetings have been held within the designated one-year period. Transition meetings for the older pupils have not been in place. The headteacher is aware that this needs to be addressed for those children reaching the maximum school age so that the school is not operating beyond its agreed age limits. The questionnaire responses from parents show that almost every parent feels well informed about their children's progress.

The school has not provided any placing authorities with an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of individual pupils.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide parents with information about the school's policy and arrangements to prevent bullying (paragraph 6(2)(h)); and
- where a pupil is wholly or partly funded by a local authority the school should submit an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

The recently revised complaints procedure includes all the necessary information and procedures. Complaints are rare; however, the school records and monitors details of any complaints in the appropriate manner. Parents are issued with a copy of the policy as part of an admissions pack when children start at the school. The majority of parents reported that they were familiar with the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details

Name of school:	Rutherford School		
DfES ref number:	306/6078		
Type of school:	Special, catering for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex medical needs		
Status:	Independent approved for pupils with SEN		
Age range of pupils:	2 – 12 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 8,	Girls 8,	Total 16
Number on roll (part-time pupils)(* +3 exceptional placements receiving outreach support):	Boys 3 *,	Girls 3,	Total 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 8,	Girls 8,	Total 16
Annual fees (day pupils):	£32,430 - £36,000		
Address of school:	1a Melville Avenue South Croydon Surrey CR2 7HZ		
E-mail address:	rutherfordschool@garwoodfoundation.org.uk		
Telephone number:	0208 688 7560		
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Headteacher:	Ms Tessa Ring		
Proprietor:	The Garwood Foundation		
Lead Inspector:	Janet Thompson HMI		
Dates of inspection:	1 – 4 November 2004		

Notes