

Rutherford School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	306/6078
Unique Reference Number	101843
Inspection number	329732
Inspection dates	23–24 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Rutherford School is part of the Garwood Foundation and is an independent special day school for up to 25 pupils aged 3 to 12 years with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex medical needs. There are currently 7 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) attending full-time. Altogether, there are 14 boys and 9 girls attending, occasionally, as now by agreement, some older pupils attend beyond the age of 12 years. All pupils have been referred by local authorities. The majority come from the London Borough of Croydon and a minority from neighbouring boroughs. The school is situated in a residential area of South Croydon and occupies a building that was originally a large family home and has been significantly extended to include specialist facilities. It was last inspected in November 2004. The current headteacher has been in post for less than one term. The school aims to 'provide a positive and life enhancing education which enables every child to achieve their full potential. This is to be achieved through an effective multi-disciplinary team working in partnership with parents, carers and the community, where communication and fun are the key elements.'

Evaluation of the school

Rutherford provides a good education for its pupils with some outstanding features. The quality of teaching is good as is the curriculum which takes account of the National Curriculum and provides personalised programmes that enable the pupils to make good progress. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good and children in the EYFS also make good progress. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Parents, carers and placing authorities hold very positive views of what the school provides for their children. The attention given to the pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of education provided is good and enables the pupils to make good academic progress. The good quality curriculum is supported by clear policies and planning based on the National Curriculum at an appropriate level. The school adopts a developmental approach to learning and takes good account of recent national guidance.

There is an appropriate focus on the improvement of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Programmes of learning are based on the pupils' needs in relation to sensory, communication, social, physical needs and skills for life. Subjects addressed include, science, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), humanities, art, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. The curriculum is highly personalised into small steps for individual pupils as required by the statements of special educational needs. It also includes a range of therapies designed to increase their communication and mobility, for example, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, music therapy and occupational therapy.

The quality of teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding. A significant strength evident in the best lessons is the wide range of teaching styles adopted. For example, teachers and assistants use signing and visual aids when appropriate to encourage effective communication. Sensory experiences are offered to all pupils to maximise the channels of communication they have. Teachers have good subject knowledge and when this is combined with recent assessment information lessons are highly relevant to the pupils' needs. All lessons offer good opportunities for the pupils to develop the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. ICT is used successfully, for example, switch use for 'cause and effect' development and particularly good use is made of digital photography for recording achievement. However, some opportunities are missed for the more widespread use of ICT and some resources have yet to be made widely available for class use.

The teachers' assessment of individual pupils' progress using pre-National Curriculum levels (p-levels) is good. Pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum and this information assists in the development of personal learning programmes. The school is reviewing its curriculum and assessment procedures to raise achievement even further. Staff have recognised that all learning targets need to be more easily measured for success and whole school analysis of achievement data is at an early stage. The new headteacher has a clear vision for further development although it is too early to evaluate the success of recent initiatives.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They participate in lessons as well as they are able and many have expressions of joy and excitement as they enter the school each day. It is clear they enjoy being at school and their parents agree. The school makes every effort to secure regular attendance notwithstanding absences due to the medical needs of many pupils. Within the curriculum, they experience a wide range of faiths and cultures represented in their school and the wider community. The pupils respond positively to the strong emphasis given to their social development. Staff go to great lengths to ensure that they provide experiences that are totally relevant to the pupils' lives. For example, visits to the community frequently involve using public transport although good use is also made of the school minibus. These experiences not only promote the pupils' cultural development but also their personal development and confidence in unfamiliar settings. Mealtimes are well structured programmes carefully delivered by education and medical staff and they are currently taken in classrooms while a new hall is awaited. Mealtimes are most useful in assisting the pupils to gain independence skills which will also prepare them well for the future. Staff offer regular spiritual experiences such as those at the end of the day when pupils and staff gather round a lighted candle and listen to relaxing music in readiness for the journey home.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The many agencies and disciplines concerned with the pupils' development work well together as a team. Good use is made of all available information and baseline assessments to establish appropriate education and care plans. The small group and individual attention provided also has a positive impact upon the pupils' well-being. The home-school notebooks are monitored closely and parents feel well informed about progress. Effective links exist with secondary schools to ensure a smooth transition to secondary education.

The school's policies promote the pupils' health, safety and welfare effectively. The supervision of pupils and risk assessments are appropriate within school and during off-site visits. The staff encourage pupils to follow healthy eating habits and take regular exercise. Arrangements for child protection are good and staff remain vigilant at all times. The school's practice for safely assisting pupils' mobility and the administration of medicines and first aid are implemented very well. All accidents, incidents and interventions by staff are recorded in detail. In classrooms and all other areas, staff attend to pupils' personal care needs with sensitivity and ensure pupils' dignity is retained at all times.

Systematic safety checks are made on portable electrical equipment, and the monitoring of fire safety is good. Attendance registers are maintained as required.

The school's recent attention to its admission register has ensured that it now contains all the required information. The recent building expansion has taken full account of current accessibility legislation in relation to its premises. The school recognises the need to plan continued improvements to enable full access to the curriculum. Transport arrangements are largely sensitive to the needs of the pupils, although for a minority, the length of time spent on daily transport is too long.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietor has established appropriate safeguards to ensure that pupils do not encounter unsuitable adults. Staffing and recruitment procedures are appropriately informed by the most recent guidance, and include the maintenance of a single central register of the checks made.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation provide safe and effective learning. The main teaching areas have been relocated into a high quality purpose-built facility on the same site. The four new classrooms are all fitted with full hoisting provision to aid the safe transfer of pupils around the room. There are also good facilities for medical treatment and therapies, including hydrotherapy. Some rooms in the original building remain in use for occasional teaching and administrative use. Firm plans for continued building development will ensure further improvement. Good attention has been given to the safe storage of pupils' mobility aids to maximise areas for teaching. Highly attractive displays of pupils' achievements, particularly photographs and artwork, adorn all teaching areas and many other areas of the school. The school has good facilities for pupils who become ill during the day and there are adequate washrooms for pupils and staff.

The large outdoor play area provides good opportunities for play on grass and hard areas. The sensory garden and small cottage are stimulating features particularly relevant to the needs of the pupils. In support of the curriculum, excellent use is made of the local community, for example, visits to centres of cultural and sporting interest.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information is good and meets all but one requirement. The school maintains excellent contact with parents, carers, local authorities and all other agencies by regular telephone calls, face-to-face contact, reports and progress meetings. Written progress reports give a clear picture of how effective the provision

has been in addressing the pupils' academic needs. The same quality of reporting is evident when reviewing the pupils' statements of special educational need and care arrangements in 'looked after' reviews.

The school has recently updated its prospectus to ensure that all the relevant information is available. An informative website contains similar information although it needs to be similarly reviewed to match the printed versions. Parents, carers and one local authority who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they are pleased with the school. The school has recently sought their views about its effectiveness to improve its work further. Some parents would like more notice about upcoming events and greater involvement in its work. The school has not fulfilled its responsibility to send referring authorities an annual account of how funding for pupils is allocated: this requirement was also identified during the last inspection.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's recently revised policy and procedures for handling complaints are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provides a safe and secure environment. Teaching and learning are good and children make good progress and achieve well from their very low starting points. Children's learning, physical and medical needs are very carefully assessed and comprehensive profiles and plans ensure that their development and learning is carefully managed. Caring and well qualified teaching, medical and therapeutic staff help pupils to settle quickly in their new environment. As a result children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, physical, communication and knowledge of the world. The curriculum is carefully adapted and meets the needs of children in the EYFS through the developmental curriculum. This curriculum is sensitive and adaptable to the range of profound needs which the children have and it closely parallels the six areas of learning in the EYFS framework. There is a strong and well planned focus given to developing children's communication skills, improving their motor skills as well as helping to promote their personal, social and emotional development. Language acquisition is enhanced well by signing, visual stimuli and a good range of objects and environmental clues. Out of school visits widen the experiences of children and extend their knowledge and understanding. During the inspection, a visit to the cinema to see an animated film also included a ride on the tramway for five children.

The EYFS is well led and managed. Staff work as an effective and very supportive team. Each child is well supported by the relevant own key worker and responsibilities are rotated at appropriate intervals to ensure that this support

remains highly focused and fully effective. Parents are kept closely informed of all aspects of their child's progress and the comprehensive notes in each child's day book ensure good continuity of care between school and home. The EYFS suite is well resourced and facilities for the children's personal care needs are of very good quality. Some opportunities are created for children to extend their learning experiences into the garden area. However, the potential of this outdoor learning resource is not fully exploited. For example, planters for small plants are available at a suitable height for children to use and explore but are not used.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of the one listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- submit to the local authority, and on request to the Secretary of State, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of each pupil who is registered at the school and is wholly or partly funded by that local authority (paragraph 6(7)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- improve the use of ICT throughout the school
- ensure all learning targets are easily measured
- review the transport arrangements for some pupils
- look at ways of more formally involving parents in the work of the school
- extend the use of the outdoor provision in the EYFS.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		✓		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		✓		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		✓		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		✓		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Rutherford School		
DCSF number	306/6078		
Unique reference number	101843		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1950		
Age range of pupils	2–12		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 9	Total: 23
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 14	Girls: 9	Total: 23
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,000		
Address of school	1a Melville Avenue South Croydon Surrey CR2 7HZ		
Telephone number	020 8688 7560		
Fax number	020 8406 8220		
Email address	sylvia@garwoodfoundation.org.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Sylvia Kerambrum		
Proprietor	The Garwood Foundation		
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell		
Dates of inspection	23–24 October 2008		