

# Richmond Hill School

Sunridge Avenue, Luton, LU2 7JL

**Inspection dates** 11–12 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- There has been no complacency in the school since the last inspection and the drive, enthusiasm and vision of the headteacher ensure that the school continues to be outstanding.
- The headteacher has developed an outstanding team of senior and middle leaders who have been exceptionally effective in maintaining and continually improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teachers are highly skilled at adapting lesson activities to ensure every pupil succeeds and as a result, pupils of all ages and abilities make outstandingly good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together in setting high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour in lessons. Pupils are valued as individuals and the school does much to raise their self esteem. It promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstandingly well.
- Pupils love coming to school because it is a very happy place where they feel safe. Staff manage behaviour exceptionally well so that no learning time is lost. The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is outstanding and attendance rates have improved significantly.
- Teachers make excellent use of signing, visual timetables, symbols and extremely well-chosen resources to ensure that pupils with different learning needs are absorbed in their activities.
- The governing body has improved its skills since the last inspection and now has an accurate view of the school's work. Governors provide outstanding support and challenge because they are very well informed and are frequently involved in the everyday life of the school.
- Leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils are rightly proud of the school and are fully committed to maintaining its excellent performance when the new building opens in September 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- Together with members of the leadership team, the inspectors observed 19 lessons. This enabled inspectors to see how teaching staff provided for pupils with different types of learning difficulties.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, four members of the school council, the Chair of Governors, a parent and community governor. The lead inspector also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work and heard a small number of pupils read. They also looked at a range of documentation, including the schools self-evaluation summary and school development plan. They considered safeguarding policies, records of behaviour, attendance figures, information about pupils' progress over time, annual review reports and the monitoring of teachers' performance records.
- The inspection team considered 24 responses to the online survey (Parent View) alongside the school's own parental questionnaire. They also took into account 79 completed staff questionnaires and questionnaires completed by the pupils.

## Inspection team

Lynda Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Bailey

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Richmond Hill is a special school for primary-aged pupils with severe and complex needs which include autism. Due to an expansion programme the roll will increase significantly when their new building opens on a separate site in September 2016.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A high proportion of the pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- A high proportion of pupils are of multi-ethnic heritage, mainly from Pakistani, Bangladeshi or African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The school is part of the Luton First Teaching School Alliance and as such regularly carries out training programmes to other schools. Two of the senior leaders are accredited Specialist Leaders in Education.
- Richmond Hill is part of a strong partnership with nine other special schools across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. This means that staff from all of the schools have the opportunity to share good practice and check the quality of pupils' work.

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

- Ensure the staffing structure is reviewed so that the exceptionally high standards in teaching, achievement, behaviour and safety can be maintained during the expansion programme.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- A shared vision and ethos in the school are evident and are based on regarding all staff as professionals and all pupils as individuals, so that the school's mission statement, 'Learning Together with Confidence and Respect' has real meaning. Staff morale is high because they are given the confidence to be creative, to take risks, and to share and learn from each other in order to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met effectively. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent because they enjoy their lessons as the teachers make them exciting and fun.
- Governors, senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, family support workers, therapists, the site manager, catering and cleaning staff all work together as a team to ensure every aspect of the school's work is of the highest quality and secures pupils' well-being and achievement.
- The leadership team is very active and is constantly reviewing its practice in order to maintain and develop pupils' outstanding progress. Leaders have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that could be improved even further. Middle leaders are now increasingly involved in monitoring aspects of the school's work and make a significant contribution to identifying where practice could be improved even further.
- There is a relentless focus on raising pupils' achievement and this, alongside recognition of what achievement for individual pupils looks like, means that the activities the children take part in are challenging but achievable. Teachers regularly review and adapt the provision so that the individual needs of pupils can be met in an effective and supportive manner. The way in which staff meet the sensory and health care needs of individuals is extremely impressive and has a positive impact on pupils' engagement in lessons.
- The extremely well-planned curriculum provides a wide range of exciting opportunities for the pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. They gain a very good understanding of life in modern British democratic society. For example, they vote on their class 'star of the week,' and also for their school council representatives. Staff encourage pupils to make choices, value themselves and recognise their own abilities and challenges.
- The leaders' highly effective checks of teaching, planning and assessment procedures provide clear evidence of their determination to improve the already high quality of teaching and learning. Such work underpins the very strong arrangements for managing the performance of teachers, which is clearly linked to the national 'Teachers' Standards' and pupils' achievements and progress.
- The study of different faiths and cultures in lessons and assemblies ensures that there is no discrimination of any kind. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and this is reflected in the consistently high achievement of all groups of pupils, including the most and least able. The school actively celebrates the worth and individuality of every pupil and takes care to ensure that each has the resources and experiences necessary to succeed.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium is used effectively to support eligible pupils. They know the difference this funding makes to pupils' outstanding progress. The employment of a family support worker has had a very positive impact on pupils' engagement with learning and has enabled parents to support their children at home effectively.
- As a result of the primary physical education and sport premium, there are increased opportunities for all pupils to access the outdoor facilities throughout the year. These have led to an increased participation in physical activities. The school has also introduced daily sensory circuits, which get the day off to a purposeful start. They have also had a beneficial impact on pupils' well-being.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and robust and all statutory requirements are met. Staff have received training in tackling extremism should it occur.

- The local authority holds the school in high regard and is closely involved in the plans for the future expansion of the school. It provides light-touch support to this outstanding school.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governors bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the school and provide excellent support because their capacity to challenge leaders has improved. High quality training has ensured that they are very clear about their role and responsibilities to hold the school to account. Governors know the school well through their regular visits to meet with subject specialists, observe lessons and their attendance at assemblies and special events. These, combined with headteacher reports, enable them to have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. The school's analyses of pupils' progress and of the quality of teaching are thoroughly scrutinised and discussed. Governors monitor performance of staff and are aware of the action that leaders should take when teachers are at risk of not meeting their objectives. They are then able to make sure that the quality of work is related to their pay and professional development. Financial aspects are well managed by governors and they particularly check the spending of pupil premium funding and the primary physical education and sport premium.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- There is a very welcoming, calm, purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Staff have very high expectations of learning and behaviour and pupils respond extremely positively. They have excellent attitudes to learning and are happy, engaged and eager to please. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above average.
- Some pupils have challenging behaviour as a result of their disabilities but make rapid improvements over time. This is because all staff carry out individual behaviour plans successfully and consistently follow agreed procedures so that pupils know what is expected of them. Any incidents are very skilfully managed and pupils very quickly re-engage in learning.
- Staff make sure that pupils are aware of each other and encourage them to make friendships. As a result, pupils get along together exceptionally well and show care and concern for each other. They are genuinely pleased when their classmates are successful and take great delight in voting for the class 'star of the week'.
- Lessons are very well structured and use well-rehearsed routines which help to reduce anxieties and make pupils more receptive to learning. This is particularly evident during sensory circuit sessions. Staff are very skilled in using symbols to focus attention and to remind pupils how to behave; this is done very sensitively and does not disrupt the learning of others.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and staff speak highly of the guidance and support to families and pupils who may be particularly vulnerable. Robust systems assess any potential risks to pupils' safety and well-being during school activities and visits. Staff supervise pupils closely at all times.
- Pupils have excellent relationships with adults and show kindness and respect towards each other. They are courteous and polite to visitors and are confident to go to any member of staff if they feel worried about anything. Discussions with pupils and the records kept by the school show that bullying or harassment of any kind does not occur.
- Pupils move very safely around the school from one area to another. They are exceptionally well supported to follow safety rules when handling equipment such as scissors, gardening tools and cooking utensils. They are taught about how to keep themselves safe when using the computer, crossing roads

and encountering strangers.

### **The quality of teaching** is outstanding

- Excellent planning, knowing the interests of individuals, flexibility and excellent relationships are key components to the success of staff in meeting pupils' individual needs. These are clearly evident in all lessons. Pupils enjoyed participating in learning, were confident, polite and extremely proud of their work and achievements.
- A very strong emphasis on communication, literacy and numeracy across all subjects is evident both in planning and practice. Teachers and teaching assistants use a range of strategies, including signing and visual support to enable those with less formally developed skills to communicate effectively. In all classrooms visual timetables are displayed and all pupils, in particular those with an autistic spectrum condition and communication difficulties, benefit from the use of these, and from pictures, symbols and technological aids to make the most of their engagement in learning.
- Pupils' written work and annotated photographs, the school's information about pupils' progress over time and learning seen in lessons, show that teaching over time, across a range of subjects, is outstanding and never less than consistently good. As a result all pupils, including those with autism, the disadvantaged and the most able are making sustained progress leading to outstanding achievement.
- All adults in the classroom have a clear grasp of pupils' abilities and how the next small step in learning will be achieved. Sensitive, well-differentiated questioning gives all pupils the opportunity to succeed. Staff make a point of telling individual pupils how well they have done.
- Pupils make links across subjects which enhance their learning and encourage them to develop their problem-solving skills. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson when pupils were deciding what items they would pack in a suitcase to go on a visit to Peru to meet Paddington Bear's Auntie and were explaining the reasons for their choices.

### **The achievement of pupils** is outstanding

- School leaders track the progress of individual pupils from their starting points on entry to the school. Although cohorts are small and variable, leaders compare the progress made by pupils to those nationally that have similar starting points. This shows that progress is outstanding across the school, including for those who have an autistic spectrum condition.
- All pupils make progress because teachers are very skilled at finding the best ways to help them learn. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and make a significant contribution to the progress made by pupils. All staff are able to assess accurately what progress, achievement and engagement may look like for a particular child as they know the pupils extremely well.
- Assessment focuses very much on the progress pupils make against their individual targets. The removal of national curriculum levels has had very little impact on the school as the majority of pupils are working at P levels (performance scales for pupils with special educational needs who are working below National Curriculum levels). The careful analysis of assessment information ensures that, if any pupil is at risk of not progressing as expected, this is swiftly recognised and additional help quickly put in place.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium are making outstanding progress in their reading, literacy and numeracy skills because of the individual attention they are receiving. Many of these pupils speak English as an additional language as well as having more complex learning needs. School information on their progress, which has been checked by the local authority and by partnership schools, shows that they are making the same good and outstanding progress as their peers. The school's systems, which ensure that teachers' judgements about pupils' progress are accurate, are rigorous and robust.
- Pupils quickly learn to recognise and use symbols and then letters and words through the well-organised

provision for teaching reading and writing.

- The most-able pupils read with confidence and fluency and understand the text. This was very evident in a Year 3/4 class where, having read Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', pupils were able to write their own short sentences to describe how they would make an advertisement for their own brand of chocolate bar. They were also able to explain how a computer programme would help them to design the label for their own brand bar, how much it might cost and why people may choose to buy it.
- The most-able pupils leave Richmond Hill as confident individuals who are well prepared for the transition to secondary education as they have made outstanding progress in their literacy, numeracy and communication skills.
- Strong progress in numeracy is shown by the pupils' growing confidence in matching objects and recognising numbers and later in their counting, adding and subtracting skills. Numeracy is taught in a very practical way which means that pupils learn to apply these in everyday situations that are meaningful to them.
- Pupils make extraordinary progress in their personal, social and moral development. Given their particular learning needs, pupils move through the school developing from individuals who find it very difficult to be with others to being highly sociable, polite and extremely well-behaved individuals with a very strong sense of right and wrong. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school staff and the progress their children make at the school. As one stated, 'I am so glad I made the decision to send my son to the school. It is a weight off my shoulders knowing I am sending him to staff who care and work so well with him'.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109743
<b>Local authority</b>	Luton
<b>Inspection number</b>	448925

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	122
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Leslie Robertson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jill Miller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 721019
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