

RNIB Sunshine House School

33 Dene Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2DD

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leadership is outstanding. Leaders and governors rigorously check the school's effectiveness on the quality of the curriculum, teaching and pupils' outcomes. As a result, the school provides an outstanding level of education for all its pupils.
- Governors make a significant contribution to the school. Excellent strategic leadership directs the school so that the quality of provision remains high.
- The Eden Academy Trust formally supports the educational aspects of the school, including leadership and staff development. This has helped to maintain the school's many strengths.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and relevant to pupils' needs. Pupils thrive in a range of subjects, and experiences are skilfully designed for pupils with low or no vision.
- The school's values and '10 golden rules' underpin this successful school. These rules ensure that pupils receive the utmost respect and have a voice.
- Pupils behave extremely well and enjoy being at school. They are courteous, polite and welcoming to visitors.
- The provision for pupils' personal development and welfare is a strength of the school. A cohesive approach exists between teaching staff and therapeutic services, which supports pupils' well-being exceptionally well.
- Pupils' learning is outstanding. Excellent teaching and strong assessment techniques, promoted by leaders, ensure that tasks are suitably matched to pupils' needs.
- Pupils' outcomes are excellent. Leaders develop high-quality staff at all levels and pioneer a belief in each pupil's ability to make progress, even from very low starting points.
- Children in the early years provision receive an excellent and nurturing start to their school life. Children respond extremely well to engaging activities suited to their individual needs.
- Some pupils' absence is reducing as the school works closely with pupils and families whose children do not attend school regularly. Nevertheless, overall attendance is low.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence rates so that these are at least in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The newly appointed head of school, supported effectively by senior leaders, is determined to provide the best possible education and care for pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils with complex learning needs grow in independence, achieve highly and communicate their views and choices with confidence.
- Leaders are robust in checking the school's effectiveness. Despite the recent changes to the senior leadership team, current leaders have built successfully upon the ambitious culture which already existed in the school. Staff share leaders' and governors' determination to ensure that pupils thrive and attain their potential now and beyond the school.
- The formal partnership with the Eden Academy Trust has been instrumental in maintaining an outstanding quality of education. The trust provides timely and effective support, such as in leadership, staff development and the provision of therapeutic services. Staff have opportunities to work collaboratively and share best practice with other schools in the trust.
- Leaders nurture high-quality expertise among staff. A wealth of professional development opportunities is on offer to support pupils' needs, including suitable training from therapists. Planned programmes ensure that new staff share the aspirations for the school and understand the best ways to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff morale is high.
- The '10 golden rules' underpin the school's core values that all pupils receive respect and have a right to a voice. There is an emphasis on consistently supporting pupils' communication systems so that they can express their opinions and learn effectively.
- The balanced curriculum is highly relevant to pupils' needs, abilities and interests. The use of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets creates personalised plans for every pupil. These plans detail sensory methods to boost pupils' learning. In this way, pupils make excellent gains in a range of subjects, including literacy and numeracy, because their needs are exceptionally well met.
- Along with therapeutic services, specialist and parental input are highly effective and crucial aspects of the broad curriculum. These provide a range of exciting learning experiences for pupils with visual impairment to explore and develop excellent skills. For instance, combining physiotherapy with music helps pupils to improve their mobility in a fun way. Extra-curricular activities, such as visits, trips and going swimming, enrich pupils' learning and develop their independence.
- The extensive provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all aspects of school life. For instance, tasks that support day-to-day living activities, such as getting dressed and learning about different faiths, enhance pupils' cultural experiences. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Additional funding provided through the pupil premium and special educational needs funding is wisely spent. Support such as with sensory stimulation equipment and personalised communication aids fulfils the school's aim to focus on all areas of pupils'

development. This results in pupils, including the disadvantaged, making excellent progress, both academically and in their personal development.

- The school is very committed to working closely with parents and carers, who are full of appreciation for this caring and purposeful school. As well as workshops, parents have opportunities to join in and enjoy various activities alongside their children, including a family swim session. Comments from parents include: 'the atmosphere around the school is amazing', 'staff are brilliant' and 'the school is a family'.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. The roles of the local governing body, the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and Eden Academy Trust's board of trustees are clearly defined. Their collaborative work shows that they are all ambitious for the pupils to develop and succeed.
- The strategic leadership of the RNIB, which owns the school, the board of trustees, which retains oversight of the school, and others in the academy trust is excellent. The governing body, responsible for safeguarding arrangements, is also extremely supportive towards leaders but does not shy away from providing challenge. Governors make a significant contribution to the school, including by actively monitoring the school's performance extremely well.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and priorities of the school. Senior leaders' reports, the gathering of stakeholders' views and governors' own visits to the school inform this. While governors recognise that the provision is well tailored to pupils' needs, and teaching and pupils' outcomes are outstanding, they are not complacent. They continue to strive for improvements, particularly to prepare pupils for their future lives after RNIB Sunshine House School.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The protection of children and support for their welfare receive a high level of attention from all adults. Leaders ensure that a positive culture of safeguarding exists at the school.
- Thorough recruitment procedures and appropriate checks ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Staff are suitably trained to spot signs of possible harm to pupils, including from neglect, physical abuse and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Staff are very clear on the steps to follow should they have concerns about the welfare of any pupil.
- Links with external agencies to safeguard the welfare of pupils are well established. Detailed written records, including pupils' risk assessments, are effectively used to ensure that pupils receive the early help they need, when required. Similarly, strong interactions with parents and therapists ensure that adults are swift to respond when pupils show signs of becoming vulnerable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils throughout the school thrive in response to high-quality teaching. A cohesive partnership between therapists and teaching staff provides suitable activities which are interwoven throughout the school day. This is a strong feature of the excellent teaching and learning.
- Teaching staff have a secure understanding of pupils' needs. They use this information effectively to engage and motivate pupils in their learning. Staff place pupils at the heart of everything they do, which leads to pupils making marked gains in their achievements.
- The assessment of pupils' learning is strong. Ambitious but realistic targets are set for pupils, based on the identification of their needs. Pupils' small steps in learning, measured against their targets, are carefully recorded by teachers in lessons. This, being an area for improvement from the last inspection, is much improved. Pupils' assessment information informs teachers' planning for personalised learning.
- Teachers' creative planning captures pupils' interests and develops their skills. Teachers use a wide range of resources to great effect, linked to pupils' individual learning plans. Pupils learn how to use their hearing and senses of touch, smell and taste to join in activities and explore the world around them.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers use the requirements set out in pupils' EHC plans to organise work pitched at the right level for learning. Teaching maintains a good balance between teaching pupils new skills and encouraging them to explore, so nurturing their independence.
- Teachers have a wealth of experience in working with pupils who have visual impairment. They utilise every opportunity to strengthen pupils' basic skills, including their communication. For instance, teaching staff use a range of communicative methods, such as symbols, appropriate language and gestures, which support learning extremely well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school's '10 golden rules' underpin excellent practice to support pupils' well-being, and this permeates all aspects of school life. The integration of therapeutic services within the curriculum promotes pupils' well-being exceptionally well.
- Staff are extremely effective in building positive relationships with their pupils. They use sophisticated techniques that encourage pupils to express themselves, whether by verbal or non-verbal means, for example using facial expressions. This is a crucial but charming feature of this school.
- Successful learning is effectively encouraged and helps to raise pupils' self-esteem. The celebration of pupils' work builds their confidence, along with staff offering praise for what they have achieved, no matter how small. Staff understand pupils' needs and

their level of communication and, so, pupils receive the right level of support to develop and improve.

- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being receives the utmost priority from all staff. Pupils benefit immensely from specialist services, such as occupational therapy, mobility, physiotherapy and music therapy. Access to speech and language therapy plays an important part in developing pupils' communication skills.
- Staff take great care to ensure that pupils' health needs are well catered for. Every pupil has a risk assessment, and the registered nurse ensures that pupils' medical needs are effectively managed. The school promotes healthy eating well. Teachers and support staff engage with pupils during mealtimes, ensuring that their eating and drinking arrangements are being adhered to.
- Close and effective partnerships with parents and therapists foster a coordinated approach and supports pupils' ability to stay safe. There are no concerns about bullying and staff are vigilant to any actions that pose a risk to pupils' welfare. Pupils, staff and parents agree that pupils are safe in the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- A warm, nurturing and friendly atmosphere permeates the whole school, promoting pupils' positive behaviour extremely well. Often, pupils' smiles and joyful facial expressions show that the school is a happy place to learn.
- Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the day. Some pupils find it difficult to socialise and understand the world around them because of their individual needs. With the support of staff, pupils are courteous and greet adults and visitors politely. This reflects the caring relationships modelled by adults in the school and the opportunities pupils have to mix with their peers.
- Pupils show an enthusiasm about their learning and a determination to succeed. Occasionally, the nature of pupils' special educational needs gives rise to difficulties in engaging in their learning, leading to some pupils becoming slightly agitated. This is managed well by staff, who act quickly and calmly to minimise the level of disruption. Exclusions of pupils are non-existent at this school.
- Despite the school's good efforts, overall attendance is below that seen nationally. Generally, absences are due to pupils attending medical appointments, including hospital admissions. The school works closely with external agencies to support pupils and their families so that they attend school more regularly. Over time, this has led to a reduction in the overall rate of persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make rapid progress from very low starting points. Outstanding teaching and specialist support enable all pupils with visual and physical impairments, and other complex learning needs, to excel.
- Pupils develop a wide range of skills, including communication, which support their

learning extremely well. Teachers constantly encourage pupils to practise these skills, often through using symbols, signs or bodily movement. This leads to pupils improving the way they let adults know their choices, feelings and views.

- Pupils in all year groups make excellent progress across a wide range of curriculum areas, including English, mathematics and science. This is because these subjects are carefully integrated across the curriculum at a level appropriately suited to pupils' needs. For instance, pupils develop their understanding of 'cold' and 'snow' by touching ice cubes. Pupils improve their sense of sequencing by ordering familiar events.
- Pupils achieve very well in creative subjects, including art, music and physical education. The combination of the teaching of these areas and therapeutic services, such as physiotherapy and music therapy, enhances pupils' outcomes.
- Pupil premium funding has a positive effect on outcomes. The strong progress of disadvantaged pupils is similar to that of their classmates across the curriculum and in the development of social skills. Likewise, pupils who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress from their very low starting points.
- Pupils make very strong progress in their personal development. Teachers work closely with therapists to set targets that are bespoke to each pupil. This leads to pupils developing essential skills for daily living, such as dressing, including unfastening buttons to clothing.
- Pupils flourish, both academically and in their social skills. This prepares them well for the next steps in their education, training or employment.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children in the early years provision receive an excellent level of education. On arrival, their special educational needs are carefully analysed, and this information helps staff to devise a personalised curriculum. This, along with the nurture and care which the children receive, supports children's learning and progress extremely well.
- Leadership is strong. Children benefit from an adapted curriculum with links to early developmental goals that effectively support their needs. Safeguarding is effective, as in the rest of the school. The commitment to keep improving the provision is well supported by the effective monitoring of teaching, learning and outcomes.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching staff make full use of children's interests and use sensory techniques to help them move on rapidly with their learning. Children respond well to the engaging activities carefully planned for them. Teaching encourages children to make decisions and communicate their choices. For instance, children were actively choosing what materials to use during a craft activity.
- The learning environment engages children. The use of both light and dark sensory rooms and the well-resourced outside area supports pupils with low or no vision very well. Adults use song and dance to motivate the children, particularly to develop their mobility skills and to make their learning fun.
- Children behave well and enjoy being at school. Staff inspire children to be active, curious and broaden their knowledge of the world and other people, for instance through a visit to a local pet shop and participating in cooking sessions. Teachers and

teaching assistants work together effectively, resulting in the children growing in confidence and meeting the requirements of their EHC plans.

- From very low starting points, children make strong progress. This is because of excellent teaching and carefully planned opportunities for the children to explore. Additionally, a cohesive approach by teaching staff and specialist services, including medical, enables the children to develop strong communication, personal and social skills.
- Additional funding is used extremely well. Disadvantaged children improve their progress and attainment over time as a result of targeted support that boosts their learning.
- Partnership with parents is highly effective. Parents have opportunities to share in their children's education, for instance via planned events and parental workshops. This helps parents to support their children's learning at home. Parents value the digital learning journal which captures children's learning throughout the school day.
- The early years provision prepares the children extremely well for the next steps of their learning and education. Where appropriate, teaching enables children to begin developing phonics skills suited to their needs. Strong and ongoing assessment practices ensure that the children achieve the best possible outcomes and transition into Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	102463
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	10058818

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	2 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Inglese
Headteacher	Mark Fuell (Head of School)
Telephone number	01923 822538
Website	www.rnib.org.uk
Email address	SHSadmin@rnib.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2014

Information about this school

- RNIB Sunshine House School is a specialist day school which caters for pupils who are blind or partially sighted and who have additional profound, multiple and complex learning disabilities. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is owned by the RNIB and works in partnership with the Eden Academy Trust.
- Pupils are placed at the school by several local authorities.
- The school has brokered formal support from local medical services so that a qualified nurse is on site five days a week.
- A high proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A large proportion of pupils are non-verbal communicators. About 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

- A very small number of pupils attend the alternative provider, Pentland Field School, which is part of the Eden Academy Trust.
- The senior leadership has changed since the last inspection in July 2014. From the start of this spring term, the previous executive headteacher is the director for academy development for the trust. A newly appointed executive headteacher oversees this school and other schools within the trust.
- The previous head of school retired in August 2018. The current head of school was appointed in September 2018, following his role as assistant head of school.
- The school has a local governing body which is separate from the trust. The governing body, the RNIB and Eden Academy's board of trustees provide the strategic direction for the school.
- The school is not in receipt of Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds. At the time of the inspection, there were no children aged two years on roll at the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons across all key stages with school leaders. Pupils' work and teachers' records about pupils' needs and achievements were looked at. Inspectors visited pupils' activities outside of lessons, including during their lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with leaders, other staff, a speech and language therapist, medical staff, two groups of pupils and with three members of the governing body, including the chair. Telephone conversations were held with the director of the RNIB, Eden Academy's chair of trustees and the chief executive officer.
- Documentation provided by the school was scrutinised, including information about safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, minutes from governing body meetings and records of pupils' progress and attendance.
- There were five responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View: too few to provide a report. However, inspectors met with a group of parents and there were two responses to Ofsted's free-text service.
- Inspectors considered the 22 responses to the Ofsted online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the Ofsted online pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Rosemarie McCarthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sam Nowak	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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