

Inspection of Richmond Hill School

Sunridge Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 7JL

Inspection dates: 19–20 November 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel excited about coming to school. They enjoy learning because they get on so well with staff and they like seeing their friends. Pupils know if their friends are having a 'bad day' and 'look after each other if one of us is feeling sad'.

Staff want every pupil at the school to achieve as best they can. They plan activities that help pupils with different needs develop in their own way. Pupils learn well alongside one another, play nicely, eat meals and snacks without too much help, and build the skills to become more independent.

Pupils feel comfortable, happy and safe at school. Clear routines help to keep them safe. Staff supervise pupils well. Some pupils' behaviour can be difficult at times, so staff are vigilant to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others.

Parents and carers know that staff are available to discuss any issues. They see the 'leaps and bounds' their children make, especially the ability to share more often, take turns and become more confident. Parents are pleased that their children understand and communicate more easily, improving their behaviour both at school and at home. Importantly, parents see the difference that staff make to improving their children's lives.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious and know what they want pupils to learn. Pupils' individual plans highlight the key objectives from their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers design activities that are best suited to help pupils to meet the targets. Staff know how difficult it is to record those small steps and are looking at new ways to better assess pupils' progress. The curriculum meets pupils' needs well, but leaders know it can be even better. Their new 'roots, shoots and leaves' approach aims to weave pupils' social, emotional, physical and sensory needs through activities more precisely.

On the whole, pupils attend school frequently and behave extremely well. However, some become restless when teachers plan activities that do not take account of what pupils know and can do. Staff support pupils to stay focused and help them to overcome difficulties and complete the tasks. This helps pupils to concentrate for longer and grasp new concepts.

In the early years, reading, speaking and attention skills are a strong focus. Children carefully listen to stories, such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk', where staff model the use of phonics and expressive language well. Staff adapt the phonics programmes appropriately to meet children's specific and individual needs. Children learn different ways to say what they mean, and being able to be understood gives them confidence. Children benefit from a variety of activities and experiences in a well-resourced and nurturing learning environment.

Typically, pupils join the school with very few independent life skills. They benefit from a fantastic programme that helps them become the delightful pupils they are. They learn the vital skills of how to eat without help and dress themselves, how to get on with other people, and how to learn. Lunchtimes are enjoyable occasions where everyone encourages good manners and the importance of healthy eating. As pupils progress through the school, they learn more advanced skills. They learn how to choose ingredients from shops, how to pay for them and how to cook meals. They help others through joining the school and ecology councils. The visits to places such as Warwick Castle give them memorable experiences and a great insight into how they can cope and succeed in the wider world.

The headteacher has brought a sense of purpose and clarity of vision to the school's work. Alongside other leaders, she has acted decisively and purposefully to identify the key aspects of how to move the school forward. Staff feel galvanised and excited by the changes and challenges ahead. While staff acknowledge there has been an increase in workload, many say this will improve once the new processes become familiar.

There is a small group of parents who are dissatisfied with the provision. The headteacher has tried hard to engage with the parents. She remains committed to working with this group of parents to resolve the issues.

While the role of governors in challenging leaders is new to some members of the governing body, they feel energised and keen to be involved in the next stage of the school's development. They bring a range of valuable experiences and different skills to their roles and these are now being matched to particular areas of responsibility. Records of governing body meetings show that governors are starting to hold leaders to account more effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant. They know there are greater risks to pupils' well-being because pupils cannot always communicate how they are feeling. Staff know the pupils well. They have a detailed understanding of how pupils normally behave and are quick to spot and record anything unusual. They act as advocates for the pupils and help them to understand how to be safe and keep themselves safe.

Leaders have robust processes in place to minimise the risks to pupils' safety. Safer-recruitment processes are followed tightly. Safeguarding arrangements are given a high priority and staff understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- For some pupils, particularly the most able pupils, the activities they complete are not matched closely enough to their specific needs. These pupils could make better progress. Leaders need to adapt their curriculum offer and teachers need to plan more precisely so that all pupils' learning is matched closely to what they know and can do, and what they need to learn next.
- A group of parents are dissatisfied with the provision the school offers but are not complaining directly to the school. This makes it very difficult for the headteacher to understand the issues raised. The headteacher needs to continue to work with the parents to resolve their concerns.
- Governors have not challenged leaders well enough over time. Leaders' work has not been scrutinised closely enough. Governors need to implement and check their new monitoring arrangements, so that they hold leaders to account effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	109743
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10110238
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bianca Spiteri
Headteacher	Kathie Hughes
Website	www.richmondhill.luton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2018

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils have an EHC plan. Many have a diagnosis of autism and/or communication difficulties.
- The school is based on two sites:
 - Richmond Hill (East) on Crawley Green Road, Luton LU2 9TL caters for Year 1 to Year 3 pupils (and provides for some Reception-age children)
 - Richmond Hill School (West) on Sunridge Avenue, Luton LU2 7JL caters for Year 3 to Year 6 pupils.
- A new headteacher joined the school in September 2019.
- There is a new leadership structure in place, with deputy and assistant headteachers on both sites.
- A new chair and vice chair of the local governing body have been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We visited a range of classes across both sites. We looked in detail at reading, writing, mathematics, physical education, and personal, social, and health education. We met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, and looked at pupils' work in these subjects. We also spoke with pupils and staff about different aspects of the school.
- We spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of governors, including the chair and the vice chair, other staff and the school's link adviser from the local authority.
- We scrutinised a range of information from the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, the development plan, and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records. Inspectors reviewed minutes of governing body meetings.
- We considered the 50 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text option. We also considered the responses of the 127 staff who completed Ofsted's survey of staff views, and the 58 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

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