

Inspection of Rutherford House School

217 Balham High Road, Balham, Wandsworth, London SW17 7BS

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 July 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to be at this school. Staff look after pupils well and keep them safe. Pupils take great pride in their school. They typically said that they would recommend it to others. Pupils find it easy to make friends here and they support each other. Older pupils enjoy helping younger ones, such as with spelling. Pupils like being able to talk about any worries with pupil 'well-being ambassadors' as well as staff. 'Pupil leaders' help to make sure that pupils' views and suggestions are taken seriously.

Pupils aspire to meet the high expectations of staff. Pupils know what is expected of them in lessons and around school. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils take the school's values seriously, such as respecting others and showing resilience. When pupils make mistakes, staff encourage them to reflect on what went wrong. Pupils do not worry about bullying because staff are quick to deal with any unkind behaviour.

Pupils have plenty of opportunities to find new interests from the vast range of extra-curricular clubs on offer, including philosophy, cookery and fencing. Leaders try to offer something for everyone and invite pupils to suggest new clubs, which pupils help to run, such as a 3-D combination-puzzle club.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and rich curriculum. They ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities to study a wide range of subjects. These include learning about philosophy and taking part in photography competitions. Pupils from Reception to Year 6 have lessons taught by specialist teachers in Spanish, music and physical education.

In most subjects, leaders have given careful thought to the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. Teachers follow well-planned sequences of lessons so that pupils develop secure knowledge over time. They check pupils' understanding regularly and address any misconceptions. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to revisit and apply their prior learning. In science, for example, teachers recap subject content. In Spanish, pupils practise familiar vocabulary before using it in their writing.

In a few subjects and in the early years, leaders' curriculum thinking is not as well developed. They have not identified fully the essential subject knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Pupils' knowledge in these subjects is not as secure as in other subjects. This lack of precision in curriculum thinking also creates some uncertainty about what teachers need to teach and assess. In the early years, staff sometimes miss opportunities to promote children's language and communication skills.

Leaders promote a love of reading across the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about the books they read in class. They like choosing their own books to read from the well-stocked reading areas around the school. Pupils look forward to 'reading-for-pleasure time' each day. Children start learning to read in Reception through a well-structured phonics programme. Staff are skilled in teaching phonics and follow a consistent approach. They appreciate the help they get from leaders to do this. Staff identify any pupils who may be falling behind. They help them to catch up quickly and become fluent readers. Leaders give lots of guidance to parents and carers so that they can help their children read at home.

Leaders ensure that staff get the information they need to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. Leaders use their expertise to identify pupils' individual needs. They make sure that staff use appropriate strategies so that these pupils achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils are polite and well behaved. Lessons are free from disruptive behaviour. Pupils are attentive and focused on their work. They want to do well. The atmosphere is calm in lessons and throughout the school. Pupils know and follow established routines. For example, during outdoor learning in the forest area, children in Reception were keen to explain that the 'Don't pick, don't lick' rule is there to keep them safe.

Pupils enjoy taking on leadership opportunities and have an active role in school life. 'Pupil subject leaders' in English, for example, check that reading displays are kept up to date and help to plan events for World Book Day. Pupils use their listening and public speaking skills to great effect in class discussions. They also enjoy competitions with other schools in the trust, including chess, sports and public speaking. Pupils are taught about the importance of respecting differences. In LGBTQ+ week, for example, pupils read stories about gender stereotypes and different types of family.

Leaders support their staff well. They give staff various opportunities to develop their professional skills, including working with other schools in the trust to share ideas. Leaders are considerate of staff workload. Staff are proud to work here and spoke of a friendly and cooperative environment

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand their duties and are vigilant. They report and log any concerns about pupils, no matter how minor these may seem at first. Leaders follow these up promptly. They keep detailed records to help them monitor pupils' all-round well-being. Staff make sure that the right support is put in place to help pupils who may be at risk.

Pupils are taught about staying safe, such as road safety and basic first aid. Staff teach pupils in an age-appropriate way about online safety. This includes how to block suspicious activity and how to identify and avoid clickbait headlines.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not identified fully the subject knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers are not fully clear about the essential component knowledge they need to teach and assess. Pupils do not build up knowledge and skills securely over time as a result. Leaders should ensure that they identify the specific component knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember in all subject areas across the school. Leaders should ensure that what pupils learn in Year 1 and beyond builds upon what children learn in the early years.
- Occasionally, staff in the early years miss opportunities to promote children's language and communication development. Some staff lack the confidence and expertise to do this effectively. Leaders should ensure that staff in the early years are well trained and supported to maximise opportunities to develop children's language and communication skills.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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	139775
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	10227421
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	386
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Claire Delaney
Headteacher	Maxine Mallett
Website	www.rutherfordhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number on roll has increased since the last inspection. The school now has two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 6.
- The school is part of the Bellevue Place Education Trust. There are nine other schools in the trust.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other school leaders and the trust's chief executive officer. Inspectors met with representatives from the trust board and the local advisory board, including the chair of the local

advisory board. Discussions were held with various groups of staff and pupils, both formally and informally.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history, science, art and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders and teachers, visited lessons where available, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to pupils read. Inspectors talked to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects and reviewed samples of pupils' work in geography, Spanish and music.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about the safeguarding arrangements at the school and reviewed safeguarding records and documentation. The single central record of staff suitability checks was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the online survey responses from parents and staff.

Inspection team

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