

# Inspection of Rutherford School

1a Melville Avenue, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 7HZ

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Inspection dates: 17 to 20 October 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils who attend Rutherford School are kept safe, and are nurtured and respected. Their complex special educational needs and/or disabilities are well understood by staff. Leaders, staff and governors are highly committed to improving the lives of the pupils in their care.

Staff have high expectations for pupils. There is a team approach to delivering the curriculum. Therapists, nurses and teaching staff work together effectively to make sure that pupils progress towards meeting their personalised targets. Staff think carefully about how to cater for pupils' individual, specific needs. They use a wide range of methods to interact and communicate with pupils and stimulate their senses.

Pupils benefit from a curriculum across a broad range of themes and subjects. This includes learning life skills that help them when they leave the school. As one parent and carer put it, pupils here 'have amazing experiences in school and in the community'.

Staff skilfully minimise any interruption to lessons that occur during times when pupils need medical support. Staff are also highly skilled at refocusing, distracting or comforting pupils if they become anxious or are feeling pain or discomfort.

Pupils learn in a safe and secure environment. Staff are meticulous in ensuring that resources and equipment are safe and well maintained.

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

Leaders and staff provide an individual, personalised curriculum for each pupil. This is constructed around key themes such as 'my body' and topics such as 'outer space'. Within each topic or theme, leaders, staff and external professionals work together to organise pupils' learning. They focus on making sure that pupils achieve their ambitious individual goals. Staff make careful and rigorous checks on pupils' learning. Pupils progress through their individualised programmes well.

Staff are specialists in working with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In lessons, staff are supported by a range of therapists who work alongside them to meet the complex needs of pupils exceptionally well.

Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum offer. They are introduced carefully to a rich range of knowledge and experiences. For example, in art, staff skilfully help pupils to use different techniques and materials to express their emotions and feelings.

Reading is a priority in the school. Staff select key texts to read to pupils that relate to other subject content that they are learning. Staff bring stories to life for pupils, for example through drama and by using visual props.

Leaders have recently introduced some new aspects to the reading curriculum. Staff plan exciting activities to develop pupils' enjoyment and engagement in rhyme, alliteration and song. They choose what pupils learn and experience carefully so that pupils gradually increase their awareness of sounds. Staff also aim to make learning meaningful to pupils, for example by focusing on the letters and sounds in pupils' names. This work is at the earlier stages of development and is not fully established.

Throughout the curriculum, there is a sharp focus on promoting pupils' well-being and personal development. Pupils' awareness of right and wrong is developed carefully, and staff help pupils to express their choices and to interact socially together. Older pupils are supported to achieve life skills qualifications, and some experience the world of work. For example, they go on visits to local businesses such as the hairdressers.

The curriculum also gives pupils the opportunity to learn about different sorts of families, cultures and faiths. All pupils are taught a personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that covers a wide range of topics. These include, for example, themes relating to how the body changes as pupils get older. Staff make sure that the content covered is appropriate to the age and stage of each pupil. The statutory guidance on relationships and sex education is followed.

Leaders have made a considerable number of positive changes to the curriculum in a short period of time. Staff have worked hard to put in place all the elements of the revised curriculum and weave them together. However, some aspects are not fully embedded. In addition, leaders have not fully or accurately evaluated the impact of the changes they have made to the curriculum. Nevertheless, they understand the need to embed the curriculum and ensure that it is fine-tuned to pupils' needs, as necessary.

Pupils show positive attitudes towards their lessons. There is no bullying or disruptive behaviour. If pupils occasionally get over-excited or noise levels disrupt group sessions, staff skilfully and sensitively redirect or refocus pupils on their learning.

The new senior leadership team has a clear vision and an appropriate plan to improve the school further. Leaders have successfully created a positive culture in a short space of time. Staff are proud and happy to work at the school and feel well supported with their well-being and workload.

The proprietor has put in place suitable arrangements for the management of the school, including governance. Governors add considerable strength to the leadership team. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are also reflective in setting strategy and in holding school leaders to account.

Leaders, governors and the proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and governors receive appropriate safeguarding training. Every member of this caring community makes the safeguarding of pupils an absolute priority. All of staff's work and interactions with pupils show this to be the case. Parents are confident that their children are kept safe and secure at school.

Staff are highly in tune with pupils' needs. They notice the smallest signs that a pupil might be uncomfortable or anxious. Staff are vigilant about any physical or emotional changes in pupils and report any concerns swiftly to leaders.

The safeguarding policy reflects the most up-to-date government guidance. It is available to parents on the school's website. Governors make careful checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work in the school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (information for the school and the proprietor)**

- Leaders have not developed approaches to checking how well the revised curriculum is working in practice. In a few instances, they have not identified where the delivery of the curriculum could be further developed and embedded. Leaders need to put in place suitably rigorous approaches to evaluating the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning. This will ensure that they have the information they need to support staff, as well as to adapt and fine-tune the curriculum further.

## **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101843
<b>DfE registration number</b>	306/6078
<b>Local authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242739
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 25
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	25
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Garwood Foundation
<b>Chair</b>	Jackie Sanders
<b>Headteacher</b>	Suzanna Bance
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£56,000 to £66,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 688 7560
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rutherfordschool.org.uk">www.rutherfordschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:rutherford@rutherfordschool.org.uk">rutherford@rutherfordschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 to 5 July 2018

## Information about this school

- Rutherford School is an independent special day school in the London Borough of Croydon.
- A new headteacher took up post in April 2022.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in July 2018, when the school was judged to be good.
- The proprietorial body is The Garwood Foundation, which consists of a board of trustees. The trustees delegate governance to the governing body.
- The school provides education for pupils aged five to 23 years. All pupils have an education, health and care plan for their profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school is registered to admit 28 pupils aged three to 25 years. Leaders have submitted a material change request to the Department for Education to increase the school's capacity to 32.
- The school does not operate a separate sixth-form provision.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, PSHE, and communication and interaction. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders to discuss the curriculum. They also visited lessons and talked to teachers and therapists.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the head of teaching and learning, the designated safeguarding leads, governors and subject leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of information relating to safeguarding and the independent school standards. They also toured the premises.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of policies and documents, including pupils' individual curriculum plans.
- Inspectors reviewed staff's and parents' responses to their respective online surveys.

## **Inspection team**

Ruth Dollner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Pocock

Ofsted Inspector

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