

Inspection of an outstanding school: Richard Cloudesley School

Tudor Rose Building, 1 Prebend Street, London N1 8RE

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 October 2023

Outcome

Richard Cloudesley School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils want to be, where their individuality is celebrated and their contribution to school life valued. No pupil is left out and all develop the knowledge and skills that will help them lead as full a life as possible.

Pupils receive the highest quality of care. However, there is an absolute commitment to ensuring that every pupil, regardless of need, also gets the best possible education. The school successfully knits together high-quality care with a first-rate education into a seamless cloak of excellence. Staff look beyond pupils' complex needs to help everyone become independent in spirit and mind.

Parents and carers commend the school highly. They said that 'no one looks down' at their children and that they are treated with the utmost respect. Inspectors found this too. The relationships between staff and pupils are warm and encouraging, as well as firm and aspirational. There are few, if any, incidences of bullying. Behaviour is extremely positive and expertly managed.

The school does much to extend pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. Links with arts organisations and the London Symphony Orchestra, for example, allow pupils to display their artwork at The Barbican and participate in playing a musical instrument. Horse riding and ballet support pupils' physical development.

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

The school is ambitious for all its pupils. It works successfully to develop pupils' independence as well as their personal and social skills. A great deal of emphasis is also given to pupils' physical, emotional and mental health development. This goes hand-in-hand with a strong educational programme, including for literacy and numeracy. Pupils are as well prepared for life after school as possible. For example, sixth-form students often go on to college or apprenticeships, where appropriate.

The curriculum is planned and structured carefully. The school identifies pupils' needs thoroughly, breaking down their education, health and care (EHC) plans into small steps. It uses these to plan a coherent and sequenced curriculum that meets pupils' individual needs. This helps to ensure that pupils learn and remember more over time. Similarly, the curriculum for children in the early years is adapted skilfully to meet children's specific and complex learning needs. From the start, provision for learning, care and well-being is strong.

Teachers and support staff are skilled in knowing what works best to promote each pupil's learning. They work together to continually review the impact of their work and develop their practice. This high level of collaboration enables care and support to be linked deliberately, and effortlessly, to learning.

There is a sharp focus on developing pupils' communication skills. Expectations from the time pupils start school, are high. The school is rigorous in ensuring that all pupils are enabled to communicate, regardless of ability. Staff are well trained in this work. Pupils' communication and interaction skills improve significantly over time.

Support for early readers has a strong focus. The school uses phonics to help pupils become familiar with the sounds that letters make. This starts early in pupils' school career and sounds are modelled and repeated over time. The impact of this work is noticeable. Where appropriate, pupils use their phonics knowledge to read from books appropriately matched to their stage of learning.

Secondary pupils, and those in the sixth form, are enabled to access the full range of the curriculum. The curriculum is suitably broad. Staff intertwine pupils' communication skills throughout lessons. In music, for example communication was an essential tool in getting pupils to develop their understanding of loud and quiet.

The range of extra-curricular activities extends the curriculum most effectively, adding greatly to the school's work to promote pupils' well-being. Recent initiatives such as 'Move more, sit less' have ensured pupils' physical needs are integrated into the school day. This strong focus on pupils' physical health and development makes a distinct difference to their quality of life. Other activities and events, such as music, provide opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

Parents are closely involved in pupils' learning, for example by meeting with staff to discuss learning objectives. Parents confirm that the school is always open to their views and ideas. They are highly supportive of the school and of its work with their children.

The school works closely with local authority outreach teams and health staff to support pupils' learning. For example, regular meetings, therapeutic interventions and training all contribute to an integrated provision that serves pupils exceptionally well. Health and school staff work closely to ensure that pupils' attendance is as strong as possible. The school provides its staff with comprehensive support in carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

Pupils' medical needs can adversely affect attendance. However, the school analyses patterns of absence thoroughly and takes swift action to support pupils' regular attendance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2014.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	100467
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10293203
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jeremy Pletts
Headteacher	Francis González
Website	www.cloudesley.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is based in two separate buildings. The primary department is based at 101 Whitecross Street, London, EC1Y 8JA. The secondary department occupies The Tudor Rose Building, 1 Prebend Street, London, N1 8RE.
- Both buildings are co-located with mainstream schools.
- National Health Service staff are co-located with the primary department.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school caters for a wide range of special needs. The majority of pupils have a profound and multiple learning difficulty. Others have severe learning difficulty and moderate learning difficulty.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, communication and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and, where possible, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum and visited some other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors also met with the chair of the governing body and governors. They spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, including written comments. They also considered the responses Ofsted's pupil survey and staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Neary

Ofsted Inspector

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