

Russet House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130958
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	301986
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr I Basharan
Headteacher	Mrs J Foster
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2003
School address	11 Autumn Close Enfield EN1 4JA
Telephone number	020 8350 0650
Fax number	020 8350 0651

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Russet House is a purpose-built school for pupils with autism. As is usual for a special school of this kind, there are more boys than girls and pupils enter the school with standards of work that are much lower than national averages, particularly in relation to communication and social skills. Pupils come from all areas of the borough and represent a diverse ethnic population as well as a range of social backgrounds. Since the last inspection the school has been redesignated to cater solely for pupils with autism and the accommodation has been expanded to accommodate the increase in numbers.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Russet House is a good school with aspects of its work that are outstanding. Governors and staff are passionate about their work and there is a very strong team ethos which not only ensures consistency for pupils, but also promotes an open and reflective approach to improvement. Good progress since the last inspection, particularly in relation to the curriculum which is now outstanding, together with good strategic leadership, gives the school good capacity to make further improvements.

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal skills and good progress in their academic learning as a result of good teaching and outstanding care, guidance and support to pupils and their families. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent with particular gains in their social interaction. High priority is given to the development of skills within group situations. Pupils respond extremely well to this and it is impressive how they are increasingly able to work, eat and play alongside one another. The quality of provision for the youngest children is outstanding. This is because the process of admission and induction gives children a secure and very well organised environment in which they settle very quickly to established routines and communication systems. As a result they make a flying start to their education. The school has improved the way in which it tracks and predicts the personal and academic progress that pupils make over time. They are aware of the need to refine this further so that information can be evaluated more thoroughly.

As a result of reflective practice and seeking the views of others, senior managers and governors have accurately identified areas for further improvement. Issues identified during the inspection match those already highlighted within the school improvement plan. This includes developing the roles of coordinators. Whilst coordinators are now carrying out the full range of responsibilities, some are only just beginning to use monitoring information to evaluate and improve aspects that they are responsible for.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further refine the use of assessment information so that pupils' progress is tracked and evaluated more thoroughly.
- Consolidate the roles of coordinators so that they play a full part in the school's self evaluation and school development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As expected, according to the level of pupils' complex needs, standards of work in relation to national averages are very low. But, more importantly, pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress in relation to their starting points on entry to the school. Individual education plans (IEPs) have targets that are set annually and these have been sensibly refined recently so that they are more clearly broken down into steps for achievement over the 12 month period. Learning targets linked to the curriculum are planned each half term within lesson planning. Both sets of targets are clearly based on what pupils can achieve individually, they are challenging and regularly monitored and revised as appropriate. Having trialled targets for pupils in Years 1 and 5 for the end of each key stage, the assessment coordinator is now exploring the possibility of setting annual targets for each class group. The school also needs to have a more clearly defined view about how much progress they expect each pupil to make

in relation to satisfactory, good and outstanding progress over time and for different aspects of personal and academic progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Visitors cannot fail to be impressed by the calm way in which pupils of all ages conduct themselves around the school. When they arrive at school in the morning they quickly settle to work. They generally respond well to the high expectations that staff have of them to communicate and work within the class as part of the group. The pupils' behaviour is excellent and even when individuals occasionally struggle with what is required of them they use strategies that often help to resolve anxieties quickly. Although they do not often interact spontaneously with one another, pupils are able to take turns within a group and, with help, many show awareness of what others are doing. They are able to express preferences and most are willing to participate in group activities such as whole class tasks, circle times and sitting together at lunchtime. The excellent personal skills that pupils develop in the Foundation Stage set the scene for further improvement as pupils move through the school. Even the youngest pupils are able to move from one activity to the next calmly and purposefully. By the time they reach the age of 11 most pupils are able to apply skills in a range of situations, often independently with appropriate prompts and support. Other pupils will have moved on successfully to local mainstream schools by this time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff are highly skilled in teaching pupils with autism and the school invests heavily in ensuring that these skills are developed. As a result, the planning and delivery of lessons is very well suited to the needs of the pupils. As a team, classroom staff know their pupils very well and the progress that pupils make is a direct result of the consistency that joint planning and assessment of attainment bring to the classroom. Good teaching is characterised by high expectations and swift movement through a series of activities, linked by a clear purpose, and learning that is reinforced by the teaching of specifically related vocabulary. Pupils' behaviour is managed well through consistent approaches and opportunities to maximise communication and independence are generally well thought through. Occasionally pupils are not given time to respond at their own pace. The balance of group teaching and individual tasks works well and contributes significantly to pupils' ability to be part of a group and to transfer learned skills in a range of social situations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it provides a flexible way of ensuring that pupils make progress in their learning as well as their personal development. Curriculum plans help teachers to devise tasks that are tailored to learning objectives for different levels of ability and prior learning experiences. The Foundation Stage curriculum is appropriately balanced around each area of learning. Units of work are arranged throughout each key stage in such a way that opportunities to generalise learning in different, yet complementary situations are maximised. Similarly, opportunities to ensure that learning tasks give sufficient opportunities to reinforce

IEP targets for social and communication skills are achieved through weekly meetings between classroom staff. This approach to curriculum planning works very well and is enhanced by an appropriate focus on learning within practical and meaningful activities. This enables pupils to make very good use of their skills within the school community and within the local context. The curriculum continues to develop in response to very good monitoring and evaluation by the deputy headteacher. She has rightly identified that curriculum plans for literacy have become too complex and is looking to revise these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff have high expectations of themselves as professionals as well as high expectations for their pupils. Professional dialogue is ongoing to discuss issues as they occur as well as to celebrate successes. Highly skilled staff applying a range of communication approaches including Makaton and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and the development of these, together with very good support for the appropriate implementation of these systems, is provided by the speech and language therapists. This supports pupils very well because different approaches can be applied at different times according to need. It also gives a high degree of consistency and predictability in which pupils can try new things and allows new pupils to settle quickly into established routines with peer groups that are calm and actively engaged in communicating with adults.

Families with pupils new to the school are supported well. The induction period, prior to starting in the Nursery, and the parent workshops help families to consider different approaches and to see how the school works with their children. There are very good procedures to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior managers and governors provide staff with strong strategic leadership. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher lead by example and share a clear vision for school development. The good progress made to the curriculum since the last inspection is testament to the way in which they have systematically approached the task, resulting in a much firmer focus on learning objectives. This in turn has improved the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Although some good progress has been made in assessing pupils' progress over time, some issues remain and the school is well aware of the job that still needs to be done. Assessment systems have been developed over the past two years to ensure that there are now more robust baselines of attainment from which to track progress. This means that it is easier to analyse the progress made over time for pupils in the Nursery and Key Stage 1, but not so straightforward for older pupils.

Coordinators are increasingly playing their part in evaluating how the quality of teaching and the curriculum affect pupils' learning and rates of progress. This is beginning to impact on school development but it is still too early for their work to be making a significant difference. They are however, extremely able, committed and fulfilling the full range of appropriate roles and responsibilities.

Governors support the school very well. They engage in quality debate and, as a result, have a good grasp of the schools strengths and weaknesses. They are now looking for ways to

strengthen this further to ensure that they are contributing fully to development planning and driving change.

The excellent partnerships that the school has with others are a strength of the school. It means that support is coordinated well for maximum effect for pupils and their families. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that the vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the work of the school. They are especially pleased with the gains that their children make in their independence and personal skills within social situations.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Russet House School, Enfield, EN1 4JA

I was very pleased to visit your school and I think that Russet House is a good school.

I saw lots of good work and I know that you enjoy coming to Russet House School very much.

Julie is a good headteacher and all of the staff work very hard to help you learn.

Thank you

Heather Yaxley

Her Majesty's Inspector