

Red Gates School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101855
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	323540
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	74
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	11
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ted Andrews
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Beaman
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	489 Purley Way Croydon CR0 4RG
Telephone number	020 8688 1761
Fax number	020 8680 2167

Age group	4–12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Red Gates is a community special school for 74 children and pupils aged 4-12 years with a wide range of learning disabilities. Eleven children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). All have statements of special educational needs. Three quarters have severe learning difficulties and the remainder have profound, multiple learning difficulties; half have additional autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The cultures of pupils are diverse, with approximately one half being of Black African or Black British origin and one-quarter White British. The rest are from other ethnic minorities, including Asian and Black Caribbean. Approximately one third speak English as an additional language and are at an early stage of acquiring English language. A similar number receive additional ethnic minority support. Boys outnumber girls by approximately 2:1. The school's intake is becoming increasingly complex in relation to the special educational needs. The school is part of a local network including mainstream schools, and provides outreach support to local schools. Recent awards include the Healthy Schools Award, the Inclusion Quality Mark and the Activemark. The school is due for re-location in 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Red Gates is an outstanding school. The pupils make excellent progress in their learning and personal development. Inevitably, due to their learning difficulties, the standards reached by pupils are exceptionally low, but they achieve outstanding success in relation to their starting points.

The quality of teaching is excellent with several exemplary features. These include high quality planning based on comprehensive assessments made by teachers and teaching assistants. They are supported by colleagues who have recognised expertise in several areas including EYFS, signing, behaviour management and ASD. These skills are used to good effect for the benefit of pupils in lessons. All teachers are fluent in using a wide range of communication methods, as are most teaching assistants. A small number, mostly newer staff, have yet to develop such fluency in signing, which occasionally reduces their effectiveness. The specialist skills within the school are readily shared with other schools.

The vast majority of pupils meet their challenging targets. Where they do not, the school carries out a review of individual progress and promptly acts to provide appropriate support. Progress is also examined in individual subjects and where necessary, required improvements are implemented. The pupils enjoy coming to school and parents are very happy for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe and well cared for.

The school's monitoring and tracking of pupils' overall achievement is meticulous and leads to the pupils receiving relevant experiences with just the right challenge. As a result, the curriculum is outstanding. It is also enriched by access to mainstream settings, a wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school. Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development due to the well integrated provision of PSHCE (personal, social, health and citizenship education), support and guidance. The pupils enthusiastically take up responsibilities when provided and offer opinions when sought. For example, they have made suggestions about the new school. More formal opportunities, where they may regularly express their views through a school forum, are not currently available. In discussions with pupils, they are very proud of their school. Their behaviour is excellent, as is their attendance. Absences are invariably due to medical reasons.

The overall quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils and parents is excellent. School procedures, including child protection, ensure pupils' well-being is appropriately safeguarded. Parents are assisted in helping their children at home by regular communication and events such as 'family learning' where they gain specific advice and access to relevant resources. Pupils receive a wide range of therapies to improve their access to the curriculum and overall independence. Lunchtimes and snack-times are well used to support pupils' autonomy. Respect for the pupils' wishes and dignity in their personal care are strong features of daily life at school.

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding due to the example set by the headteacher and her leadership team. Managers have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. The school has consolidated its strengths, recognised at the time of the last inspection, and continues to give outstanding service to its pupils and the community. Its capacity for further improvement is also outstanding. The school is very well supported by the active governing body.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding. The teacher and teaching assistants monitor the children's progress meticulously. This high quality assessment enables the staff to provide highly relevant experiences that enable the children to make outstanding progress towards achieving their learning goals. The staff recognise the importance of developing the children's abilities to communicate and this helps them in all other aspects of their learning. They use their knowledge of the children's abilities and interests to provide exciting activities that engage the children in learning. Regular access to outdoor activities and movement sessions ensure that physical development is given a suitable high priority. The children are given a firm foundation for learning and this helps to promote their outstanding personal development and well-being. Teamwork is a key feature as is outstanding leadership. The staff team have a thorough understanding of EYFS developments and ensure this is reflected in their practice that seeks to develop the whole child. The staff have well developed pro-active links with other agencies, including the portage service, to help ensure a smooth start to full-time education. These external links and those with parents ensure that the welfare of the children is excellent. Parents hold very positive views about the EYFS and they are supported by the structured 'starter programme' to aid transition from part-time to full time education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable all teaching assistants, especially those newer to the school, to be as proficient in communication with pupils as the majority of staff.
- Consider formalising ways of gaining pupils' views about school life.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The range of ability within the main school is exceptionally wide ranging although remains within pre-National Curriculum levels (p-levels). The overall attainment of learners is exceptionally low due to their special educational needs. Nevertheless, in relation to their starting points, the pupils' achievements are outstanding, irrespective of their gender or ethnic origin. Pupils make excellent progress in meeting challenging targets in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils respond very well to the school's efforts to keep them active and healthy, as seen by national awards in both areas. The staff team works very hard to provide a safe and secure learning environment where the pupils thrive. On arrival, many pupils' beaming smiles and cheery greetings indicate how much they enjoy school. Their excellent attendance and behaviour support this judgement, and parents agree. One commented, 'My son really looks forward to Mondays!' In discussion with pupils, they appreciate what the school provides and were keen to say how much they valued the staff, their friends and many activities. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their development are outstanding, especially in their growing awareness of themselves and other cultures. Many work well in pairs and teams which helps them prepare for the next stage of their education. They respond well to the many options given to them by staff where they can state preferences for activities and meals. There are

however no formal opportunities for them to give their views on school matters through a school council or similar group. They make a good contribution to the school by helping with jobs around the school. Fund-raising for national charities enables them to develop an understanding of needs beyond their own. Their presence in local schools and hosting mainstream peers adds significantly to community cohesion.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers have consistently high expectations of themselves and the pupils. Twice weekly meetings between teachers and teaching assistants help to maintain the clear focus on each pupil's progress. The staff have a good knowledge of their subjects and each pupil's preferred learning style. This results in the planning of effective strategies to maximise learning. For example, each pupil has a folder that contains their known likes and dislikes and how these may affect their attitudes to peers, adults and learning. This ensures that the learning environment is happy yet purposeful and gives the pupils security and confidence to learn. All teachers and the vast majority of teaching assistants are well skilled in using a wide range of communication methods that include picture exchange, symbols and signing. Teaching resources are used imaginatively to provide first hand practical experiences that consolidate learning. Teachers' management of time is exemplary and pupils move seamlessly from one activity to the next with minimum disruption. When appropriate, teachers use plenary sessions at the end of lessons to encourage pupils to reflect upon how much they have learned.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The morning sessions where pupils are grouped by ability, offer carefully targeted lessons in English, mathematics and science. As pupils are working at similar levels, good opportunities are provided to work in pairs and small groups. This promotes their ability to work with others and assists their personal development. Good opportunities are provided to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects. Equally, sensory experiences are used to engage pupils of all abilities. For example, pupils explore textures to sort materials in science, and counting out in mathematics is successfully achieved by beating a drum.

The curriculum also includes a programme of inclusive activities which takes place alongside mainstream peers from the local schools either at Red Gates or at the local schools. Their learning is also significantly supported by the contribution of visitors to the school that include local pupils and also by a wide range of educational visits to the community. The provision of activities after school and lunchtime clubs adds to their personal development. Regular access to local sports facilities, including several swimming pools and horse riding ensures that limitations in the accommodation do not restrict the pupils' curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is extremely successful in providing all embracing support for pupils and their families. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils take account of the most recent legislation and within this safe and supportive environment pupils make excellent progress. Pupils with challenging behaviours are well managed due to carefully crafted plans and consistent

implementation. Academic reviews for all pupils and those for 'looked after children' are of high quality. Data is used to extensively monitor progress and provide suitable interventions to maximise progress and equality of opportunity.

The school works very closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils have maximum access to their learning. Therapists and medical staff integrate their support most effectively. Links with parents are very good and they made many very positive comments about the care and support provided by the staff. Comments included, 'The staff give 110%...they are always available to offer advice...the school is brilliant!' An exemplary element is the 'family learning' sessions run in association with the speech and language therapist. These are well attended and provide parents with resources and practical guidance about how to support their children at home. The school effectively manages transport arrangements and the limited space available for vehicles. It is conscious of the need to minimise time spent by pupils in vehicles before the start of the school day.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and leadership team lead by example and ensure that the school lives its values and ethos. There is a clear sense of direction and the success of the school and headteacher has been recognised through a wide range of awards. The school was recently re-assigned the Inclusion Quality Mark and gained the highest grading in all respects. An example, of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity is seen in its inclusion programme and the determination to overcome transport difficulties to provide after school activities. Its extensive links and partnerships with other schools are highly valued and mutually beneficial. The school looks at its own practice in great detail and surveys widely to gain an accurate view of its own effectiveness. For example, pupils' progress in science was analysed by the subject leader when anticipated success did not occur. This led to an increased emphasis on ensuring staff used a wider range of communication aids. This action resulted in raised achievement in that subject. The school's development planning addresses appropriate areas, all designed to improve the provision for pupils. The work to ensure a smooth transition to the new site is well underway without sacrificing commitment to the present. Leadership across the school is distributed very well and this helps to drive forward improvement. The experienced governing body makes an excellent contribution to leadership and management with a balance of support and challenge to senior leaders based on first-hand observation and specialist knowledge in premises and finance. The school's finances are well managed and appropriately audited.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

03 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Red Gates School, Croydon, CR0 4RG

I was so pleased to see how well you all do at school and thank you so much for the warm welcome! I can tell you that you go to an outstanding school and it is clear that you enjoy your lessons. All the staff work very hard to help you learn. The quality of teaching is outstanding and this helps you to become as independent as possible. I think your behaviour and attendance are excellent. You make outstanding progress and you told me just how much you enjoy learning and visiting other schools. Those exciting activities such as swimming and horse-riding, help you to stay fit and healthy. You have excellent relationships with the staff and each other. The school also helps your parents and carers so that they can help you at home too.

I am asking your headteacher to do a couple of things to help the school be even better for you. One is look at ways in which you can have even more of a say in what happens at school. The other is to help all staff, especially the newer ones, to be as good as the teachers are in communicating with you.

I wish you lots of luck in your new building!

Yours sincerely

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector