

Russet House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130958
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	341072
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Halford
Headteacher	Mrs J Foster
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Around two thirds of the inspection time was spent looking at learning. Fifteen lessons were observed and 11 teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors and parents. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school improvement plan, teachers' planning, assessment information, policies and the minutes of governing body meetings. Thirty-one parent questionnaires were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which teaching and learning ensure all pupils achieve their best, with a focus on those who are functioning at a lower level
- the success of the school in ensuring improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance and in providing for its most vulnerable pupils
- the effectiveness of leadership at different levels in ensuring improvement, particularly in teaching and learning, and in the ways it promotes community cohesion.

Information about the school

Russet House is a special school catering for pupils with autism. The vast majority of pupils have associated learning difficulties. All either have a statement of special educational needs or are in the process of being assessed for one. Pupils come from all areas of the local authority and occasionally from further afield. They represent a diverse ethnic population with the three largest groups being Black African, Black Somali and White British. A high proportion are from homes where English is not the first language spoken. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in either the Nursery, the Reception class or in a mixed class for Reception and Year 1 children. The school is purpose-built for pupils with autism. It has Healthy Schools, Activemark and The Leading Parent Partnership awards. It provides an outreach and inclusion service to other schools in the borough.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Russet House is an outstanding school where pupils achieve extremely well. Pupils of different backgrounds and abilities make excellent progress and invariably reach or exceed their challenging targets. The quality of teaching and the curriculum are excellent, with innovative practice in the ways in which the school encourages pupils' social interaction and independence. The exceptionally strong partnerships with parents, other professionals and a wide range of schools enrich the already very high level of support for pupils. These very strong links underpin the high level of success Russet House has in re-integrating pupils back into mainstream schools. Staff assess the needs of each pupil meticulously and tailor the provision very carefully to meet them. This ensures that all pupils, whatever their needs, have equal opportunities to achieve. A key factor in the school's success is the respect that all members of the community show to pupils. Consequently, pupils' self-esteem and behaviour improve dramatically from first entering the school and there is a calm working atmosphere. As a result of the very high level of individual care, the youngest pupils get off to an excellent start. If at any stage difficulties arise in pupils' personal circumstances, these are identified quickly and addressed so that pupils do not fall behind.

The senior leadership team has extremely high expectations of staff and pupils and sets ambitious targets, based on rigorous and honest self-evaluation. The constant pursuit of excellence, based on leading edge research into autism, is driven strongly by the headteacher and very ably supported by the senior team. This underpins a highly effective programme of staff development. As a result, marked improvements have taken place since the last inspection. These include improvements in pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching and assessment, the use of information and communication technology (ICT), and in the contribution made by leaders at different levels to school improvement.

Governance is good. The governing body is rigorous in ensuring pupils and staff are safe and that the school provides excellent value for money. They are clear about the strengths and weaknesses in the provision through their regular monitoring. They are aware that their skills in checking pupils' progress are not fine-tuned enough for them to be certain pupils' excellent progress is maintained. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding at a local level and well developed at a national level, notably through links with the National Autistic Society. Governors recognise that it is not sufficiently developed for pupils to learn all that they might about different peoples and cultures around the world. Plans are in place to develop this further. With the commitment of staff and governors to wanting the very best for the pupils, the school is extremely well placed to improve in the future.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that governors:
 - fine tune their skills so that they can be sure pupils' excellent progress is maintained
 - see that plans to extend community cohesion are implemented in order for pupils to learn more about others in a global context.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils try hard and enjoy their lessons. In an outstanding mathematics lesson for older pupils, staff tailored learning so well to pupils' needs, using a wide range of communication strategies to deepen understanding, that all made great strides in learning. As a result, pupils fully understood how to collect data, in this case about different sized boots, and how best to present their findings. Learning of this quality was seen in many lessons, demonstrating that pupils' progress is extremely good. Even though standards are well below those in mainstream schools, this represents excellent progress for all pupils given their starting points. Detailed assessment along with a very high level of support given to those who are functioning at a lower level and those who do not speak English at home ensure that they achieve extremely well.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn about each other's feelings and use moments of reflection, such as prayer time in assembly, very well. All are keen to celebrate the fact that 'there's all sorts of people' at Russet House when singing the school song. Lunchtime is an exceptional feature where pupils demonstrate their massively improved social skills. Pupils feel safe and readily turn to adults when in need of support. They use equipment, such as swings and slides, with a high regard for safety. Their understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle is excellent and reflected in the Activemark and Healthy School awards. All take an enthusiastic part in activities as wide ranging as tennis, swimming, sailing and horse riding, as well as the weekly timetabled physical education and soft play sessions. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community and, through the school's wide ranging links, make an excellent contribution to the local community. Pupils' radically improved personal and academic skills, particularly the excellent gains in learning to work and play with others, and their good attendance prepare them extremely well for life after school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Staff have very high expectations of pupils. They plan meticulously and use the school's excellent resources, such as ICT, very well to support pupils' communication and to create an excellent atmosphere for learning. Their teaching is underpinned by outstanding relationships and a seamless approach to behaviour management. All staff, including support staff, help to build pupils' confidence so that pupils are keen to contribute their ideas. Staff know individual pupils very well and they set work that closely matches their needs. This is assessed carefully and used very effectively to guide future learning. Pupils' progress is tracked and checked rigorously. Recent updating of the system allows for even more in-depth ways of checking pupils' progress than in the past.

The curriculum is personalised to meet pupils' needs with a flexible programme of therapies tailored very carefully to each individual. It emphasises communication, literacy, numeracy and ICT which very effectively support pupils' future well-being. Personal development is given a very high priority and, as a result, pupils' attitudes to learning improve rapidly once they join the school. Work undertaken on developing pupils' skills in managing their own behaviour and social interaction is of exceptional quality. The school provides a very wide range of enrichment and real-life experiences, for example through many outside visits, camping for older pupils and work undertaken with other schools. All of these play a vital part in increasing pupils' confidence as well as their enjoyment of school.

The Leading Parent Partnership award recognises the quality of the school's work in encouraging parents and carers to be fully involved in their child's education. Parents

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and carers value the close links that provide support not only to their child but also to them. Staff work tirelessly to develop pupils' self-esteem and help them stay safe and healthy. Their links with others, including health professionals, are used exceptionally well to support pupils. Vulnerable pupils are carefully monitored and supported. Pupils are closely supported when joining or leaving the school, and are given very good guidance for the next steps in their educational lives. The school is very effective in promoting good attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher embeds ambition and drives improvement extremely well. Along with senior leaders and governors she has communicated a clear vision and programme for improvement and has secured the support of all staff. Curriculum and pastoral leaders, including those who oversee outreach work, take on new challenges with enthusiasm. They have improved their skills and now play a vital role in school improvement. Governors have a wide range of skills and use these well to support and challenge the school. They are rightly developing their expertise so that they can make best use of the school's revised system for tracking pupils' progress. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are extremely thorough and robust and that all staff adopt a very vigilant approach. The school is highly successful in promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. If any difficulty gets in the way of pupils doing their best, every effort is made to resolve the issue so that pupils quickly get back on track.

There are clear strengths in community cohesion, for example through the school's involvement with many local and some national institutions. Pupils act as excellent ambassadors for those with special educational needs. The school is aware that it is not as effective in a global context. It has enrolled for the International Schools award and has plans in place to link with a school in India.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

As a result of the outstanding provision, children make excellent progress. They achieve especially well in their personal, social and emotional development and in the ways in which they learn to communicate their ideas. They settle quickly into school and develop confidence and independence. Staff plan activities with a well thought out balance between those that children can choose for themselves and those led by an adult. They are skilful at organising activities that match children's interests, as seen in the Nursery when the children engaged in a wide range of practical activities, including a plasma screen, to develop their skills in mark making. The outdoor area is used very effectively to cover all six areas of learning. Children are safe and extremely well cared for and all welfare procedures are of extremely high quality. Relationships are excellent and children play happily together.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are excellent. The very strong links they have with Enfield's Pre-School Support Service and work undertaken through the Early Bird training programme mean that children and parents are exceptionally well supported, even before joining the school. This support continues, for example through the regular programme of home visits.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Views of parents and carers

Just under half the parents and carers returned the questionnaire. The responses are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. They indicate that their children are very happy at school. Comments such as: 'The obvious commitment and dedication of the staff are very much appreciated' and 'This school has been great for the whole family' sum their views up well. Parents and carers spoken to were all positive about the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Russet House School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	68	10	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	74	7	23	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	68	8	26	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	39	17	55	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	20	65	10	32	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	65	10	32	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	55	13	42	1	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	45	14	45	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	58	12	39	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	45	15	48	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	58	12	39	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	20	65	9	29	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	71	8	26	0	0	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Russet House School, Enfield, EN1 4JA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We came to the school to see how well you are doing. We were very pleased with what we found because Russet House is an outstanding school.

Teaching is excellent, and you learn very well indeed. For many of you, behaviour is greatly improved and we judged it to be of the very highest quality. Your school provides you with excellent care and support. The staff have very high expectations of you and we could see that you try hard. The atmosphere in school is brilliant and you told us that you enjoy school. The staff work hard to make sure you are safe and healthy. You are given a very interesting range of things to do, such as the many visits out, including going horse riding and sailing, and also overnight camping.

The school is extremely well led and managed. The staff are very keen to do their best for you and to develop the school even further. Governors do a good job and we have asked them to check to make sure you all carry on doing as well as you are now. We have also asked them to make sure that the school develops wider links to help you gain understanding of the lives of others around the world.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector

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