

Richmond Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109743
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	325019
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Leslie Robertson
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Miller
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 January 2006
School address	Sunridge Avenue Luton Bedfordshire LU2 7JL
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with staff, a parent governor and groups of pupils. She observed the school's work and looked at school planning documentation, school policies and 29 parental questionnaires. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at;

- the progress made by different groups of pupils
- the contribution made by the school to community cohesion
- the curriculum which the school offers.

Information about the school

Richmond Hill is a special school for pupils with severe and complex needs. Pupils are referred to the school by the local authority from nurseries and mainstream schools across Luton. They arrive at different times throughout the year. Luton is a culturally diverse urban area with high levels of economic deprivation. Attainment on entry to the school is well below the national expectation because of the nature of the pupils' difficulties and disabilities. The severity of the pupils' difficulties, on entry to the school, has worsened over recent years. The school has appointed a full-time family worker who works with families in a separate lodge in the school grounds, helping them to meet the needs of their children. The school has achieved Arts Mark, Healthy Schools status, Sports Mark, ICT (information and communication technology) Mark, Investors in families and Financial Management in School award.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	62	Below average
Free school meals	33.8%	Above average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	100%	Above average
Proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities	74.2%	Above average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	62%	Above average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	100%	Above average

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Richmond Hill is a good school with many outstanding features, which has made exceptional improvements since the previous inspection. Pupils are successfully helped to overcome their severe and complex learning and behavioural difficulties. The outstanding level of care, excellent teaching and the consistent behaviour management systems in place enable pupils to make good progress in their learning, and outstanding progress in their personal development and social skills. The school knows its strengths and what it needs to do to continue to improve. The school is at a very early stage of using phonics to help pupils learn to read, and although literacy and numeracy strategies have been recently introduced across the school, targets to measure the impact of these are not in place. Very good data is now collected on the progress pupils are making, but this is not always used consistently by classroom teachers to ensure all pupils have work which matches their ability.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement literacy and numeracy strategies across the school and set measurable targets to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of actions taken in order to raise achievement.
- Improve the consistent use of assessment data in the classroom to ensure a suitable level of challenge for more able pupils, and develop external moderation with other special schools.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

- Pupils make good progress from very low starting points and achieve well. However, attainment remains below the national average because of the nature of the pupils' difficulties. Data gathered by the school over the past year using the nationally recognised levels of learning (P levels) shows that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and outstanding progress in communication and social skills, and in information and communication

technology (ICT). Lesson observations during the inspection support these findings.

- In science, progress has not been as marked and the school has begun to address this by reviewing and rewriting the science schemes of work to ensure full coverage of the science curriculum.
- School data shows that in 2007 pupils made more progress in the lower years than they did in Years 5 and 6. This was due to staffing difficulties which have now been resolved.
- There is little difference in the progress made by pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and other pupils or between girls and boys.
- Internal moderation of the levels achieved takes place but external moderation with local special schools is at very early stage of development.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and are very well prepared for life in a diverse society. Their behaviour is outstanding and they show great empathy and understanding towards each other.
- In a few classes independent learning skills are not being developed well enough and pupils are too dependent on the adults present.
- Attendance is average when compared with mainstream primary schools. This is due to the medical conditions which many pupils have, and extended holidays a few pupils take. The school is working hard to improve this, and has arranged for many of the medical appointments to take place on the school site.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The quality of the school’s work

- Teachers know pupils very well and have excellent behaviour management skills, which they apply consistently. Any incidents of poor behaviour are managed extremely well with the minimum amount of disruption for other pupils.
- A wide range of methods are used to communicate with pupils, and great effort is made to ensure that lessons are exciting and fun. For example, in a lesson on light and dark, pupils dressed in their pyjamas to hear a bedtime story read to them in a tent. As a result of this multi-sensory approach pupils began to understand and discuss what happens at night and in the daytime. Another teacher took pupils outside to make their own Rangoli patterns with sand and chalk.
- Teachers are greatly supported in their work by well trained and skilful teaching assistants. Members of staff act as excellent role models for the pupils.
- Pupils respond well and work hard in the majority of their lessons. In a few lessons more able pupils are not set suitably challenging tasks to ensure maximum progress.
- Frameworks for literacy and numeracy have been recently put in place but are not yet being used consistently across the school and the intensive use of phonics has only just been introduced.
- The school takes a thematic approach to foundation subjects, which meets needs of pupils well. It puts good emphasis on the development of personal, social and emotional skills and the curriculum is enriched by a wide range of specialist drama, music, art and sporting provision, clubs, trips and visitors.
- Topic work in the afternoons is too long for the concentration spans of the pupils and so their effort tails off.
- The school has thorough systems to ensure pupils are safe and secure. Pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to should they be upset. Academic tracking has improved considerably and the monitoring of progress in behaviour and social skills, often using ‘E portfolios’, is outstanding.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	1
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

- The very strong, dynamic senior team, consisting of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have created a supportive and dedicated team of staff and a secure and stimulating learning environment. Pupils are taught kindness and tolerance and racial harmony is promoted very well.
- The senior leadership team monitors and evaluates accurately the work of the school and they are beginning to develop the role of middle managers in this process.
- Governors are supportive of the school but they do not question sufficiently or hold the school to account. The governing body has recently set up a working group to develop their role in monitoring and evaluation. Governors meet statutory responsibilities in most aspects, but there has been no assessment of the impact of the race equality policy carried out.
- Effective policies are in place regarding safeguarding. The recruitment practices completed for staff within the school are all rigorous.
- The school is in daily contact with a range of social, therapeutic and medical services in order to ensure high quality support for pupils.
- The contribution of the school to community cohesion is outstanding, especially given that the school does not serve the local neighbourhood. For example, the school has appointed a family worker who reaches out to the families of pupils at the school, and enables them to support the learning of their children. The E portfolios of pupils' work are sent around the world to Pakistan, Italy and Poland and used to involve different cultures in celebrating success. The school regularly hosts teachers from local mainstream schools in order to provide in-service training for them.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	1
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost half the parents with children at the school completed the questionnaire and the overwhelming majority of these were positive. Parents felt included in the life of the school; through the efforts of the family worker they felt empowered to support their child's development and learning. Most were delighted with the progress their children are making, particularly in the areas of confidence, communication and life skills. They appreciate the home school book which is used to communicate to parents, and think that the teachers are excellent. For example one parent wrote, 'I think the school does a great job when you take into account the severe and challenging behaviour of its pupils.' A very small minority of negative comments concerned the preparation of pupils for the next stage of their lives, but inspectors found this aspect to be good.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.



14 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Richmond Hill School, Luton, LU2 7JL

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited your school on 12 and 13 November. I enjoyed talking with you. Richmond Hill is a very good school. I thought you would like to know what was good about your school and how I thought it could get even better.

- The school is well led by the headteacher and deputy and there is a good team spirit among the staff, who want you all to do your very best.
- You are happy in school and enjoy your lessons. You behave very well and are kind to each other.
- You are making good progress in your schoolwork and outstanding progress with your behaviour.
- Teaching and the care you receive from all staff is outstanding.
- You know how to keep healthy by eating the right food and taking exercise.
- You enjoy the good range of activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- You told me that you feel safe in school and are well looked after.

Things I thought could be improved:

- you could do more work learning to read using phonics
- some of you need to do more difficult work in lessons.

I wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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