

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Richmond Hill School

Sunridge Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 7JL

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

Richmond Hill School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Every pupil at this school is valued as an individual. Staff know pupils really well and adapt what they are doing in class or elsewhere to help them be calm and happy. Pupils feel safe and can name people they would go to if they were upset or worried.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is a strong focus on developing pupils' ability to communicate. Both verbal and non-verbal pupils make use of symbols to help them share their desires and needs. Many pupils also use these at home, and families value the increased ability to understand what their children want to say to them. The school also ensures that there are high ambitions for pupils academically, with an emphasis on learning to read for those who are ready to do so.

If pupils need to leave the classroom when frustrated or upset, they have choices about where they go. If pupils find it hard to be with other pupils on a regular basis, staff take the learning to them. Many pupils develop strong social skills and become able to work as a group. All this means that the school is a settled and happy place.

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

The school holds communication as a central part of everything it teaches. Pupils who are verbal or developing their spoken language use symbols to help them develop their sentence structure and widen their vocabulary, for example remembering the months of the year. Pupils who are non-verbal build up their use of different words rapidly so that they can share needs and learn well. The school is full of ways to enrich pupils' communication, such as using signing and objects to help pupils know what is happening where and when.

All pupils learn the steps towards reading, for example rhyme and song. Those who are ready to read are taught well. Pupils become interested in the books they read. They excitedly join in with stories, for example using different voices in 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'.

Much of the learning in school is personalised to pupils' individual needs. Pupils may be working on very different skills to their peers, albeit in the same overall topic. This means that if pupils change class or site, they have had the same experiences as others of their age. There are sometimes occasions where pupils are not given enough time to think through new learning or what they have been given to do. When this happens, staff give pupils help too quickly or the learning is not quite as challenging as it could be, which means that in these instances, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

There are a small number of subjects where staff's knowledge of how to plan for detailed steps within learning is not as developed. Where this is the case, the order in which pupils learn knowledge is not as well sequenced as in other subjects.

The school is developing its systems further to track pupils' developmental and academic steps. Leaders' use of this information, and other monitoring systems, for example around behaviour, is forensic. They map trends and use this information to support staff in finding the best ways to support the pupils in their care. This means that behaviour is generally calm and classrooms are purposeful.

There is a strong emphasis on developing skills for life, for example becoming confident at travelling on the bus or ordering food in a café. All pupils receive age-appropriate relationships education. The school has worked closely with the local communities to understand how to teach this in a way that respects their religions and cultures. Pupils learn that they have a voice and that they have choices over what they do. This is developed further in democratic votes, for example which book to read next or voting for the school council. Pupils are well prepared for transition to their next stage in education.

The school is doing all it can to increase pupils' attendance. However, mainly due to medical absences linked to pupils' needs, the rate of persistent absenteeism remains high. The school works closely with parents and carers to reduce unnecessary absences.

The leadership team has undergone changes, but now forms a stable group who work across both sites. This creates further consistency across the school and enables more sharing of best practice between staff. Staff at all levels value the regular training they receive. They put this into action, for example building up their own sets of communication aids.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some occasions where pupils are not given enough time to process what they have been taught or have been asked to do, before adults either step in to help or move on to the next activity. This means that, sometimes, pupils do not learn as well or are not as independent as they could be in those activities. The school needs to ensure that all staff have the skills to identify which pupils could be greater challenged and give pupils opportunities to process information and what they have been taught, so that they can demonstrate what they have learned and can do.
- In a small number of subjects, the way that staff use their knowledge of what pupils already know and plan for the detailed, sequenced steps towards the next learning is at an early stage. This means that pupils' learning in those subjects is sometimes not sequenced in the best order to help them learn. The school needs to ensure staff identify precisely what knowledge pupils need before moving on to the new learning and organise this in an order that supports pupils' learning effectively in all subjects.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

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	109743
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10345103
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Clare Hall
Headteacher	Hannah Cameron
Website	www.richmondhill.luton.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEND with a wide range needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is based on two sites, Richmond Hill West at the registered address, and Richmond Hill East at Crawley Green Road, Luton LU2 9TL.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 spoke to the headteacher and members of the leadership team. They spoke with the local authority officer and met members of the governing body. They spoke to teachers and support staff.

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons. They looked at samples of pupils' work and curriculum plans. They spoke to pupils both in lessons and in groups out of lessons.
- 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

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Helen Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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