

Rutherford House School

217 Balham High Road, Balham, London, SW17 7BS

Inspection dates 01 – 02 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has made sure good teaching has led to good pupil achievement during the school's first two years.
- Teachers plan exciting lessons which pupils look forward to. Pupils are taught skills in reading, writing and mathematics effectively.
- Leaders are tenacious in their work to include all pupils including those who need additional help with their learning.
- Procedures aimed at keeping pupils safe are effective and well implemented by all members of staff.
- The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop a love of learning.
- Pupils benefit from outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Pupils behave well and understand the school's core values.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of good leadership and effective teaching.
- Governors discharge their duties diligently, plan well for the further growth of the school and provide robust challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always give pupils feedback which directs them well enough to make improvements or develop their skills further.
- A few pupils rely too much on the frequent, although effective, reminders teachers need to give them about how to behave well.
- Opportunities for pupils to express their views are not as extensive as they could be.
- Middle leaders have yet to develop the full range of skills necessary to make sure their plans are implemented to maximum effect.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector made observations in lessons or parts of seven lessons. He observed learning in the outdoor area of the Early Years Foundation Stage and attended a school assembly.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the local governing body, the school's trustees, the headteacher and senior leaders, a group of middle leaders and the special needs co-ordinator.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and heard them read aloud.
- During the inspection, a range of pupils' work was scrutinised. Records of achievement and other documents related to behaviour and safety were considered.
- The inspector spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. He took account of the views of a parent whose child attends the breakfast club and one letter received from a parent during the inspection. Account was taken of 77 responses to the online Parent View survey. Consideration was also given to 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rutherford House School opened in September 2013. It is a free school and part of the Belleview Place Education Trust.
- There are currently two Reception year classes and two Year 1 classes. The school is much smaller than average. However, it is expected to continue expanding until it includes pupils from the Reception year to Year 6. All pupils attend full-time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils entitled to additional government funding is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who are of a minority ethnic heritage or who speak English as an additional language is lower than average. Around seven in every ten pupils are of a White British heritage and speak English as their first language
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- School leaders manage a breakfast club and after school care on behalf of governors.
- A sports teacher from Wandsworth Preparatory School works at the school for two days each week.
- The headteacher will leave the school at the end of the current school year. A new headteacher has been appointed and is working part-time at the school as part of the process of succession of leadership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further by ensuring pupils consistently receive explicit, helpful advice to help them improve or enhance their work.
- Develop the skills of middle leaders so that they become more effective at evaluating the impact of their plans for improvement.
- Ensure all pupils behave impeccably and demonstrate outstanding resilience in their learning by:
 - reducing the need to employ strategies aimed at reminding some pupils how they are expected to behave.
 - extending further the opportunities for pupils to express their views.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has ensured that the school values are understood by all. She has made sure good teaching is leading to the good achievement of pupils as recruitment continues in this growing school. Staff are supportive of the work of leaders. They are highly motivated to strive for the best possible outcomes for all pupils. They are tenacious and determined to overcome any barriers to pupils' learning or participation. As a result, equality of opportunity is promoted very effectively.
- Senior leaders and the growing team of middle leaders support school improvement well. They have been effective in making sure that the good achievement of children evident in the school's first year has been sustained.
- Leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness accurately. They check on the quality of teaching regularly, using these checks well to decide on priorities for training. Leaders have introduced their own distinctive system to measure and track pupil's progress. They use this effectively to check on the impact of teaching on learning. Plans for further improvements are well focused, as a result, on the most urgent priorities.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic about developing their areas of responsibility. They can explain how specific actions have led to improved outcomes for pupils. For example, the leader for computing has taken steps to sustain pupil's skills in using a computer mouse. These had diminished when pupils began to use tablet computers. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has taken effective action to improve the outdoor provision in the setting. However, overall, their leadership skills are underdeveloped, particularly in holding others to account for implementing agreed actions to maximum effect.
- The leader responsible for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is highly effective in checking that the needs of these pupils are promptly and accurately identified. Her expertise ensures that the support they receive matches their needs very well. She holds teachers closely to account for ensuring that the skills pupils develop in support groups are transferred to their class work. As a result, these pupils achieve exceptionally well, considering their starting points. She has established effective relationships with experts from outside the school. Children with the most extensive needs take a full and active part in school life as a result.
- The curriculum offers outstanding breadth and depth of opportunity to inspire and enrich pupils' lives. Teachers are very skilled at ensuring pupils understand why they are learning and providing opportunities to see connections between subjects. Parents say their children are enthused by the imaginative and inspiring activities on offer. Children begin to learn Spanish as soon as they start school. Pupils can ask questions, in Spanish, in complete sentences with impressive pronunciation as a result. The sports teacher identifies talent early and ensures steps are taken to provide opportunities to nurture it.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. They are taught to be mindful of the natural world through activities at the forest school and by learning to care for living things in school. Myriad opportunities exist for pupils to learn about and understand cultures other than their own. Carefully selected works of literature and events are used very effectively to help pupils reflect on their responsibilities and articulate their own tastes.
- Pupils are well prepared for their future lives in modern Britain. They learn the value of rules and the importance of being considerate to others. Leaders ensure that discrimination is not tolerated in school life. However, opportunities for pupils to express their views are not as extensive as they could be.
- Leaders and governors ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent wisely. Their plans for expenditure balance the promotion of equality of access to all activities on offer and provision of effective support to accelerate pupil progress. As a result, participation levels of these pupils are high and gaps between their achievement and that of others in the school have almost closed.
- School leaders report that they have not received any primary school sports funding.
- Leaders have made sure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Staff understand how to respond if they have a concern about the well-being of a pupil.
- The breakfast club and after school care are popular, well managed and offer pupils a good range of activities.
- Partnerships with the local authority have been established to provide effective support for the work of governors and additional opportunities for teacher training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Trustees ensure, through very clear statements of responsibility, that local governors understand their roles and the school's core values. They have been rigorous in selecting governors who have high expectations for pupils' achievement and possess the necessary skills to hold leaders closely to account.

The local governing body take effective steps to enhance these skills through carefully selected training. As a result, they use school information and evidence of achievement to ensure leaders select the right priorities for improvement. Trustees have managed the new headteacher recruitment process well. They have a carefully considered strategy to support the further development of leaders at all levels as the school grows.

- Governors ensure funding and resources are used effectively to improve outcomes for pupils. They make robust decisions about pay awards which are directly linked to the evidence of teachers' impact on outcomes for pupils. They make the necessary checks to assure themselves that leaders are fulfilling statutory safeguarding requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show respect for, and understanding of, the core values of the school. They typically behave very well in lessons and demonstrate enthusiasm for learning. A small number of pupils, however, are too dependent on the regular use of the effective strategies used by teachers to regain their attention and ensure they concentrate on their work.
- Leaders have been very successful in ensuring a small number of pupils who find it very hard to manage their behaviour and feelings have been included in school. As a result, they achieve well and do not disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils respect one another and value their school environment. They can explain why they get along so well together.
- Records kept by school leaders indicate an absence of instances of bullying or other discriminatory behaviour. Clear strategies are in place to manage any such instances should they occur. There have been no exclusions since the school opened. Most parents agree that behaviour is good and believe that leaders are effective in ensuring discrimination plays no part in school life.
- Attendance is good and broadly in line with national averages. A small number of pupils have attended very poorly in the past but the rigorous work of leaders has led to improvement for most.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding procedures are clearly understood by staff and meet requirements. Checks on suitability of staff are very thoroughly recorded. Training for staff is regular and wide-ranging. This has included consideration of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.
- Pupils have been taught well about how they can help look after themselves. Teachers explain why children should not share sun cream in sunny weather. Pupils know how to cross the road safely and why they need to wear high visibility jackets when attending forest school. Children in the Reception year could tell the inspector that they should not tell anyone their name or their age when using the internet.
- Leaders keep a close eye on the safety of the premises and the activities pupils engage in. Checks by external experts on safety are commissioned and any recommendations promptly acted upon.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good across all subjects. Pupils make good progress as a result of the exciting learning environment and positive relationships which teachers create and maintain. High quality displays full of challenging questions and inspiring examples of what pupils are capable of achieving are present in classrooms.
- Teachers are skilled at identifying and responding to the individual needs of pupils. They explain what pupils are expected to learn clearly. They provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and knowledge in exciting and intriguing ways.
- Teachers combine good subject knowledge and a sound understanding of pupils' levels of achievement to plan effective lessons which enable pupils to build on prior learning. However, very occasionally, pupils are set tasks which do not match their needs quite so closely.
- Pupils are taught to read well. An effective approach to helping children learn and understand the sounds that letters make (called phonics) enables children to acquire early reading skills rapidly. This includes those who speak English as an additional language. Teachers recognise the importance of helping these

pupils understand the meaning of words which are not part of everyday language.

- Pupils are expected to learn to write for a wide range of meaningful purposes. For example, in Year 1, they write letters to an environmental organisation asking for advice about caring for a tiger. As a result, progress in writing is good, though pupils would benefit from more precise feedback when they write independently and at length.
- Teachers enable pupils to develop skills in recognising, ordering and identifying patterns in numbers well. They make careful observations of how pupils apply their mathematical skills in practical situations and use this to check understanding. Teachers ask more-able pupils probing questions to deepen their mathematical understanding and this helps them develop a more systematic approach to solving problems.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught exceptionally well. Support staff enable these pupils to feel confident and learn in ways which suit them. Any barriers to learning are carefully considered but never used as an excuse for accepting less than these pupils are capable of.
- Teachers check the quality of pupils' work very regularly. Pupils' books are full of comments informing them of successes and inviting them to improve their work. However, some feedback which teachers provide does not explain what pupils should try next explicitly enough.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Leaders have ensured that good teaching leads to good achievement for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly typical for their age, though some pupils arrive with much weaker skills than this. They make good progress through the Reception year into Year 1 so that levels of achievement exceed national averages.
- The proportion of more-able children exceeding expected levels of development in the Reception year is not as high in 2015 as it was in the previous year, though this proportion still represents good achievement.
- Pupils in Year 1 sustain the good progress they make in phonics (the sounds that letters make) in the Reception year. As a result, a greater proportion of pupils reach the standard expected in the phonics screening check than was the case nationally in 2014.
- The school's own records of attainment indicate that the achievement of pupils in mathematics and writing is good. Leaders assess pupils in Year 1 using the school's own system of grades. This shows that nearly all pupils have acquired the range of skills and knowledge expected of them, and nearly half of them have mastered these skills.
- The school has a wide range of interesting and relevant books which inspire pupils to read broadly and for pleasure. Leaders have listened to the views of parents when developing approaches to encouraging pupils to read at home. This contributes well to pupils' good achievement in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve outstandingly well. Nearly all of them make exceptional progress from their starting points. Challenging barriers to learning have been overcome and complex needs sensitively met.
- Disadvantaged pupils entitled to the pupil Premium make good progress. The gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics have almost closed. The proportion achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was much greater than the national average for similar pupils in 2014, and higher than that for other pupils. School evidence indicates that this good achievement is set to continue in 2015.
- Speakers of English as an additional language achieve at least as well as other pupils.

The early years provision

is good

- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and nearly all achieve a good level of development. They are well prepared for beginning Year 1. A small number of children with special educational needs or disabilities make outstanding progress from their very low starting points due to the very skilled work of teachers and leaders. However, the achievement of more-able pupils is not outstanding because the proportion of these pupils exceeding a good level of development has declined since 2014.
- Teachers skilfully question children and capture their achievement so that opportunities can be offered to extend their knowledge and skills as soon as they are ready. They provide a good range of activities to

help children learn to read, write and acquire basic mathematical skills. Parents contribute to the assessment process and appreciate the extensive information provided about their child's achievement.

- Children are well supervised. The setting provides a safe environment for learning and play. Teachers and support staff speak to children in a caring and encouraging manner, whilst still managing to communicate high expectations for behaviour and learning.
- Children behave well and understand why they need to. A few children need very frequent reminders to help them listen well and concentrate. Teachers have very effective and consistently applied strategies to deal with this.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has set effective priorities for improvement. For example she has ensured the outdoor area has improved since her recent appointment. The guidance available for children to help them understand how to make the most of the activities on offer is clear and sharply focused.
- Children are delighted to explain the many exciting activities they have engaged in. The curriculum offers them outstanding opportunities to acquire a love of learning and nurture their natural curiosity.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139775
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	450154

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janes Walker
Headteacher	Gina Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	02086725901
Email address	info@rutherfordhouseschool.co.uk

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