

Inspection of an outstanding school: Rutlish School

Watery Lane, Merton Park, London SW20 9AD

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 April 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They value the support that they get from teachers and staff. Pupils are motivated and work hard. In the majority of subjects, teaching helps pupils to understand the content being taught. Pupils achieve very well across the curriculum. In the sixth form, nearly all students go on to attend university.

Pupils are happy and safe. They behave well around the school and are focused in lessons. Leaders have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Incidences of bullying or racism are not tolerated. Appropriate support and sanctions are put in place swiftly if pupils' behaviour falls below these high expectations.

Leaders and governors are determined that every pupil's education should go beyond the taught curriculum. There is a range of activities that pupils can take part in, for example over 80 pupils belong to the school's Combined Cadet Force. However, some pupils in Years 7 to 11 do not take up these opportunities. Sixth-form students participate in a regular enrichment programme. This includes a range of opportunities such as learning sign language, playing sports and discussing literature.

Pupils feel listened to. They are encouraged to share their ideas and shape the development of the school. For example, pupils can become form representatives, join the school council and become a member of the junior leadership team.

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

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders plan the curriculum so that knowledge and skills build logically over time, from Year 7 through to the sixth form. For example, pupils in Year 8 are prepared to understand complex concepts such as 'impermanence' in Buddhism because they learned the necessary foundational knowledge before. Leaders

have begun to refine their curriculum in some subjects, ensuring that it continues to evolve and improve year on year, for example by taking into account prior learning in other subjects. However, this work is at an early stage.

A strength of the curriculum is the large number of subjects that pupils study throughout their time at school, including the sixth form. Leaders have thought carefully about what subjects pupils study in all year groups. For example, they have introduced Spanish in Years 7 to 9, alongside German and French, to increase the number of pupils choosing a modern foreign language at GCSE.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to learn the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders work closely with a range of external experts, such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, to ensure that pupils get the specific support they need. This information is then shared with teachers through clear support plans for individual pupils. Leaders identify early those pupils who cannot yet read well. They provide additional support through bespoke reading sessions to help them catch up.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are subject experts. They typically select activities that help pupils to learn the curriculum and that develop an appreciation of the subject. For example, in science, pupils are introduced to specific scientific techniques through carefully selected and interesting practical work. Assessment is generally used well by teachers to identify what knowledge pupils do and do not know so that they can provide feedback. However, in a few cases, teachers do not systematically check pupils' learning. This means that, sometimes, some pupils do not get the specific help that they need to make sense of the new learning.

Behaviour around the school and in lessons is calm and focused. Pupils are respectful to each other and staff. There are clear systems and policies in place that staff use to ensure that no time in lessons is wasted with off-task behaviour.

Leaders have planned the curriculum carefully to support pupils' broader development. This introduces pupils to important aspects such as healthy relationships, the significance of consent and the importance of respect. These aspects are revisited in different years to promote pupils' age-appropriate understanding. Alongside this taught programme, there are a number of extra-curricular opportunities that pupils can take part in, for example chess club, sporting fixtures and charity work. Leaders have recently introduced a new system to monitor pupils' take up of these opportunities and have identified that some pupils do not sustain their participation. They are in the process of addressing this.

Pupils are well prepared for their next steps when they leave the school and move on to the next phase of their education or training. For example, from Year 9 onwards, every pupil can access the support of a careers adviser. In the sixth form, students receive dedicated support when applying to university and/or apprenticeships. Alongside this, visiting speakers from universities and companies running apprenticeship schemes encourage pupils to consider the full range of opportunities available to them.

Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of their school. They are ambitious and have identified the right areas for development to focus on. Staff are proud to be a member of the school. They value the support that they get from leaders. Leaders are mindful of staff's workload and have been proactive in taking steps to reduce unnecessary burdens on staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe and know who to report concerns to.

Leaders consider the specific safeguarding needs of pupils carefully. There is a wide range of additional support available to pupils if they need it. For example, a school-based mentoring team provides one-to-one support for a range of pupils. Leaders also work with external agencies to secure the necessary help for pupils, if needed.

Leaders have recently introduced a new system for staff to report safeguarding concerns. They have provided the necessary staff training on how to use this system and are phasing out the old one.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few cases, aspects of the school's curriculum intent and implementation are not embedded securely and consistently. This means that the quality of education provided is not exceptional for all pupils. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum intent and implementation are embedded securely and consistently across all subjects and that the curriculum is reviewed, refined and developed after teaching so that it improves year on year.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in April 2017.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	102679
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10217421
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,440
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Norrie
Headteacher	Laura Howarth
Website	www.rutlish.merton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up the post in September 2019.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to nine pupils. This caters for pupils with speech, language and communication needs.
- The school uses one registered provider for alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, governors, subject leaders and a representative from the local authority. On day two, the inspectors met with the head of sixth form and visited some enrichment activities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: modern foreign languages, English, science, religious studies and design and technology. Each deep dive involved discussing the curriculum with subject leaders, visiting a sample of lessons, reviewing samples of pupils' work and speaking with teachers and pupils from the lessons they visited.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors visited the specially resourced provision that provides support for pupils with SEND. Inspectors also met with the special educational needs coordinator to find out how the school supports pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum. This involved reviewing documentation to see how pupils with SEND were being supported.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and lesson changeovers to gather evidence about the behaviour and attitudes of pupils in the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements. They looked at safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their well-being and workload. They considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different year groups. They considered pupils' responses to the online survey.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online Ofsted Parent View survey.

Inspection team

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