

Inspection of The Avenue School

Christchurch Avenue, London NW6 7BH

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Rachel Rai. This school is part of The Rise Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jayne Jardine, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Christine Jackson.

What is it like to attend this school?

All people who work in this school do so with much enthusiasm and tremendous care for every pupil. Pupils' working relationships with adults are exemplary. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey were glowing about the school. Typically, they said that the teachers and therapists are wonderful in supporting their children's learning and development, and in supporting them as parents. They said that their children are incredibly happy and safe and love going to school. This is reflected in the exceptionally high levels of pupils' attendance.

All leaders and staff share the same ambition to help pupils to achieve their absolute best. They achieve these goals by ensuring that every pupil has all their needs identified and catered for. These include a rigorous curriculum, plus therapeutic and behavioural support. This joined-up approach is highly effective in preparing pupils for independent adult living.

The school has created a unique approach to managing behaviour. They have shared this with other special schools. It is sharply focused on helping pupils to engage positively with their work and gain the skills to socialise effectively. As a result, there is a highly purposeful atmosphere across the school. Staff are very skilled in quickly calming any pupil who gets distressed.

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

The school's curriculum thinking is exceptionally well developed. It is underpinned by expert input from the trust. It is highly ambitious and adapted to meet the needs of every child across the range of subjects. In all subjects, knowledge is broken down into tiny, well-sequenced steps. Alongside this, leaders have created a rigorous set of assessments. Using this assessment information, staff set ambitious targets for every pupil. When pupils have gained and remembered a piece of key knowledge, teachers move them on to the next step.

All staff benefit from a rigorous programme of induction and frequent professional development. They have many opportunities to work collaboratively and share best practice. This includes working with colleagues across the trust and other special school staff. Trust experts also play a key role in developing staff's expertise, for example training newly appointed subject leaders. This means that teachers have the skills to deliver the curriculum effectively. The speech and language therapists (SALT), occupational therapists and inclusion team all work in unison with the teaching staff. Together they plan each pupil's targets and support plans across these domains. They always keep parents in the loop. They run several workshops to assist parents in supporting their children at home. All sessions are videoed and available on the school's YouTube channel. As a result, children in the early years and older pupils achieve their ambitious targets.

There is also a sharp vision for the curriculum, which is to develop pupils' key life skills. For example, in mathematics, pupils have weekly real-life opportunities to

apply their knowledge. They role play real-life scenarios in the school's shop and/or cinema. They apply the mathematical skills and financial knowledge they have gained.

Front and centre of the school's work is to develop pupils' communication skills. Staff apply a wide range of strategies across the school. These include pictorials, Makaton and high-tech augmentative and alternative communication. Right from Reception, children are taught foundations for phonics, for instance environmental sounds and singing. The SALT team work with and train staff on how to give bespoke extra support to pupils not meeting their communication targets. Pupils also have access to a wide range of books. These include pictorial and sensory books, covering a range of genres and topics. Love of reading is promoted through staff reading to and/or with pupils throughout the day. As a result, pupils gain the vocabulary and ability to access all subjects and to express their views.

From the start of Reception, staff induct children into following routines. Across the school, staff actively encourage pupils to learn, including with rewards. Staff celebrate with pupils whenever they succeed in gaining knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils learn to enjoy studying, and they make a big effort to achieve.

The trust's motto of 'love, learn, laugh' underpins all the school's activities. The school has mapped out the enrichment activities they provide across the years and for all pupils. Activities provided include yoga and snow skiing plus workshops run by musicians and artists in residence. 'The Avenue promise' for each age group includes a range of experiences to help prepare pupils for adulthood, such as navigating the streets safely. The school's effective careers programme starts in the early years. It builds progressively over the year groups to prepare pupils for adulthood. There are also opportunities for older pupils to undertake work experience. Pupils in the new Year 10 class are studying bespoke accredited vocational courses relevant to their needs and interests.

Staff value the camaraderie and mutual support they share with their colleagues. They welcome the well-being initiatives leaders have introduced. They feel that their workload is reasonable. Trustees and trust-wide staff visit the school often. They have clear oversight of all aspects of the schools' work, including that of the local academy board.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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| Unique reference number | 143731 |
| Local authority | Brent |
| Inspection number | 10293297 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 88 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Christine Jackson |
| Headteacher | Rachel Rai |
| Website | www.theavenueschool.london |
| Date of previous inspection | 13 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Rise Partnership Trust.
- All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have autism and additional learning needs.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2023.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The number of pupils on roll has been rising rapidly. The first children to join the early years arrived in January 2023. Current pupils on roll are aged between four and 15.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and communication, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders and trust leaders. They also spoke with the chair of trustees, the chief executive officer and the chair and another member of the local academy board. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- 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.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including looking at records of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors also had formal meetings with staff and with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey. They also considered the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Wright

His Majesty's Inspector

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