

Inspection of a good school: Rusthall St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

High Street, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 8RZ

Inspection dates:

21–22 January 2020

Outcome

Rusthall St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their learning. They particularly like it when they can see the progress they are making, such as in mathematics. They are enthused by their trips out, for example to test out their map-reading skills on a local walk.

Most pupils behave well. In lessons, they are generally attentive and hard working. Pupils don't worry about bullying because it is rare, and quickly dealt with by staff. They feel safe. At lunchtimes, there is a happy buzz as pupils enjoy spending time with their friends. They generally get along well together, enjoying warm relationships with staff and each other. Pupils understand the central importance of the school's values, particularly that of 'respect'. They try very hard to model this around the school.

Leaders have successfully unified the school following a period of staff restructuring. Staff and parents and carers are confident in the advice, support and direction provided by leaders.

Leaders have taken some effective actions to improve standards, but there is more to be done to further raise expectations and ensure that all pupils achieve well.

Most pupils attend school regularly, although the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains too low.

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

Over time, pupils have not achieved well in reading and mathematics. Recent work by leaders has helped to raise standards for some groups of pupils, but for others, such as the disadvantaged pupils, the impact of this work is less evident.

Leaders have rightly made raising standards in reading a key priority. Pupils have a growing love of reading. They talk enthusiastically about authors they enjoy and relish the exciting stories read to them by their teachers. Children get off to a good start in learning to read in Reception Year. They learn their phonics quickly because teaching is consistently effective. Children practise the skills that they are learning using books that help them to experience success. However, as pupils move up the school, those who begin to struggle do not catch up rapidly, despite some additional support. Sometimes, the teaching of reading does not consider their needs enough.

In mathematics, teachers use their plans to make sure pupils cover a wide range of mathematical knowledge. These plans build learning in sequenced steps. However, teaching does not consistently probe pupils' thinking. This means that pupils' understanding is sometimes not deepened or extended. Pupils' misconceptions are sometimes not picked up or addressed, leaving gaps in their learning and their progress. As a result, some pupils, including the most able, do not learn well.

Adults know the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They build supportive relationships that help those pupils who struggle to behave well to join in with lessons. Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are clearly identified. They access expert advice where necessary, so that teachers have clear information about pupils' needs. However, leaders do not yet check that this information is well used by staff to ensure that teaching and the curriculum are adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

Leaders have a clear vision for what they want pupils to learn. Staff have been fully involved in planning to put this vision into practice. In some subjects, such as history and geography, plans have been reviewed to make sure that pupils build their learning in clear steps. This has started to help pupils to learn more and remember more in some subjects, for example in geography. In other subjects, such as art and design technology, the process of updating curriculum plans is less well developed.

Pupils' wider education is well supported by secure school values and community links. For example, pupils enjoy sharing their skills during the popular 'Learn a new skill' events. Community arts days and projects with nearby care homes help develop pupils' social skills. Pupils diligently undertake their roles in school such as those of 'head boy' or 'head girl' and as 'door monitors'.

Children get off to a good start in early years. The curriculum is meaningful and interesting to them. They join in enthusiastically with taught sessions. These are expertly matched to what they have previously learned, to build their learning effectively. In other sessions, children enjoy investigating further or practising what they have been taught.

This consolidates their learning. Because of this effective provision, children are well prepared for Year 1.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff, pupils and parents are confident that pupils are safe at school. Leaders ensure that staff have the training they need to spot if something is not as it should be. They know how to report this and are confident that leaders act promptly and appropriately on this information.

Leaders and governors have thought carefully about how to ensure that the split school site is well managed to keep pupils safe. They help pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Ensure that pupils who need to catch up in reading, throughout the school, receive timely and appropriate support, and teaching that closely meets their needs, so that their reading progress improves, and they achieve well in reading.
- Ensure that teaching in mathematics is suitably ambitious and tackles pupils' misconceptions effectively, so that pupils reliably 'build' their mathematical understanding and skills as they progress.
- Ensure that the curriculum and teaching are suitably adapted in all subjects, to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve well.
- Ensure that leaders' current work to develop the wider curriculum leads to an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including clear and coherent sequencing of pupils' knowledge and skills across all subjects, so that pupils develop their understanding and skills coherently in all subjects, and achieve well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, 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 convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	135164
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10122266
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Clark
Headteacher	Caroline Powell
Website	www.rusthall-cep.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school has been through a period of staff restructuring, which has resulted in some leaders taking on additional roles.
- The school has one class in each year group across the primary range.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with national average proportions.
- The school is a Church of England voluntary-aided school. The last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection in October 2017 found the distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rusthall St Paul's as a Church of England school to be good.
- The school runs a breakfast club. The after-school care at the school is registered and managed by another provider.

Information about this inspection

- I met with senior leaders and with members of the governing body, including the chair. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- I did deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. This involved meeting leaders who are responsible for these subjects and visiting lessons to

observe learning. Meetings were held with pupils to talk about their learning and to look at their books, and with teachers to discuss pupils' understanding and look at plans.

- I gathered a range of evidence regarding safeguarding, including from discussions with pupils and staff, and safeguarding records.
- In addition to talking to parents at the school gate, 35 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 25 free-text responses, were considered. I also took account of the views of 12 staff, and 33 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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