

Rusthall St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

High Street, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells TN4 8RZ

Inspection dates

29–30 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They are ambitious, determined and have taken decisive action to raise expectations.
- Leaders have improved almost all aspects of the school. Pupils, parents and staff recognise the improvements and value school leaders.
- Leaders ensure that teaching is good. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress. This includes those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Leaders have raised standards across the school. Teachers are clear about which pupils had low starting points in the past and work tirelessly to ensure that they catch up. Outcomes are good.
- Behaviour around the school is good. All staff have high expectations of pupils. The plans that support a small number of older pupils to manage their behaviour are effective.
- The curriculum is well planned, broad and balanced. Parents and pupils value the homework challenges that are set.
- Children in the early years get a good start to their school life. Good teaching and high expectations ensure that children with low starting points are ready to start Year 1.
- Governors are effective. They know the school well and are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders have not yet overcome the persistent absence of a small minority of pupils.
- Some pupils in key stage 1 do not settle quickly to the task at hand.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance by ensuring that the small number of pupils who are persistently absent reduces.
- Improve teaching in key stage 1 by ensuring that pupils are making the most of time in lessons, particularly when they are working without the help of an adult.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is highly effective. Her calm yet firm leadership has transformed the culture of the school. Senior staff work closely with the headteacher to ensure that high expectations of staff, pupils and parents are shared and consistently articulated.
- Leaders are rigorous and accurate in their judgements about how effective the school is. These honest reflections about what needs to be better are at the heart of the school's improvements.
- Staff work tirelessly to meet the high standards set. They are positive about the work of leaders and value the focus that is placed on the management of their performance, the progress pupils need to make and the training and support they receive. Leaders use visits to other schools to provide less-experienced staff with opportunities to see highly effective teaching. Staff value the compassion and personal qualities of leaders and talk with absolute certainty about the improvements in their school.
- Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They look very closely at groups of pupils to ensure that the most-able, the disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making at least good progress. Standards improve over time because no group of pupils is left behind.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It is broad, balanced and rich. Leaders and teachers have the same high expectations in all subjects. Standards in writing have improved because of the clear focus on quality writing experiences across the school. Pupils have access to a wide range of activities and clubs that they enjoy and that contribute to the overall quality of the school's curriculum.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key feature of the school and is well planned. Teachers take advantage of clear opportunities in the curriculum to encourage reflection and foster empathy. Visits and visitors bring learning to life, as demonstrated by the trip to the Hindu temple in Neasden.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The fundamental British values of democracy and the rule of law, tolerance, free speech and mutual respect are taught very well. For example, during this inspection, Year 5 pupils planned and delivered an assembly to the school and their parents. Pupils staged a 'debate' about whether we could, or should, take more refugees from Syria. The arguments were well constructed, mature and balanced. Pupils had written to the local MP to raise their considered questions and they shared their letters. Pupils will now have the opportunity to ask him directly, as he responded positively to their invitations to come into school. Pupils have been carrying out research, developing their persuasive writing skills and debating skills as part of their wider topic work.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their school and the qualities that the headteacher has brought to the school. Parents value the obvious presence of leaders and the opportunities to participate in school life. During this inspection, many parents supported sports day and a class assembly showing pride in their children's achievements. Parents appreciate the homework projects pupils are given and have clear information about how they can support learning at home, including via the school's website.
- Leaders use the pupil premium well to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils (the pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals and for children who are looked after). In those year groups with the most significant gaps between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and others, the gaps are closing quickly.
- Leaders use the additional government funding for sports very well. The funding has transformed the range of activity that pupils participate in before, during and after school. Pupils have gone from having no access to competitive sports to reaching finals of regional competitions. Specialist teaching develops pupils' skills well.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are effective. They have taken all of the recommendations from the external review of governance and acted swiftly to implement them. Governors now have the knowledge and skills to hold leaders to account and do so consistently.
 - Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. They use monitoring visits to test out what leaders tell them about the work of the school. Governors who visit the school write clear reports which give all governors first-hand information about the school's work.
 - Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are ambitious and determined for the school to be even better. Governors have detailed information about pupil progress, including the disadvantaged and the most able. They know which groups of current key stage 2 pupils did not achieve well enough at the end of Year 2 and look closely at their progress.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have thorough systems and procedures to keep children safe and these are known by all. The school is successful in supporting vulnerable pupils and staff work tirelessly to ensure that they are safe. Leaders work closely with other professionals and are not afraid to champion the needs of pupils when they feel that action is not swift. Staff and governors receive the relevant training and pupils' safety and well-being is a clear priority. Pupils feel safe in school and parents value the work of the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers know pupils well. In English and mathematics, teachers use accurate assessments of pupils' progress to carefully match work to match pupils' needs and abilities. Lessons challenge all pupils, including the most able, because teachers have a secure understanding about where learning is going next.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking or to clear up any misconceptions. In a science lesson, pupils were helped sensitively to correct their use of language relating to the pitch and volume of sound, so the scientific concepts were understood.
- Pupils know what they are learning and what success will look like. Teachers are clear with pupils about what improvements are required and pupils respond well to teachers' feedback.
- In most lessons, pupils engage well with the task in hand. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and, in the vast majority of lessons, pupils respond effectively. However, pupils in key stage 1 are less focused on the work they have been given and require repeated reminders. The variable level of focus, in some lessons, is not because the work is too easy or too difficult. Leaders have already made significant changes to the early years curriculum because they know that some pupils in key stage 1 are too reliant on adult support.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is taught well. Teachers and other adults in the classroom use the school's systematic approach to teaching phonics consistently. Pupils use and apply what they know with confidence in their reading and writing.
- Teachers challenge the most able pupils well. Expectations across the curriculum are high. For example, when pupils were responding to a Malala Yousafzai speech, they were challenged to capture their thoughts in 100 words or less. This helped them to sharpen their thinking and keep going back to their work until they had met the criteria for success.
- Teachers and leaders place great importance on sharing the successes and efforts of pupils. Examples of learning and progress are displayed everywhere. The key stage 1 library is awash with traditional story puppet theatres that pupils have made at home. The entrance to the key stage 2 corridor is full of topic-related home learning projects, some standing taller than the pupils themselves. Parents and pupils value the homework challenges that are set, and the school gives prominence to pupils' endeavours.
- Key skills are taught well across a range of subjects. During sports day, key stage 2 pupils were using a range of skills they had been taught to throw and jump. Those pupils putting the shot were holding the ball close to their neck, pushing their arms forward and transferring weight from one foot to the other. In art, pupils learn how to create a grid on a piece of paper, and then look closely and sketch the face of a wolf before using shading techniques to complete their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff act as strong role models for pupils. Adults around the school are warm, courteous and respectful of pupils. Relationships are strong and pupils feel well cared for. The respect that older pupils show staff has improved significantly over time.
- Pupils' well-being is given high priority across the school. Leaders ensure that the school provides specialist counselling and therapeutic support for the most vulnerable pupils. All pupils have access to a clear system for sharing their concerns, worries or fears in a safe space.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils understand what bullying is and those children who spoke to inspectors said that it rarely happens at school and that adults deal with problems quickly.

- Pupils have a wide range of roles and responsibilities across the school that are valued. The school council has improved the zoning of the playground, play leaders set up activities to keep pupils active and older pupils help younger children at lunchtime.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour has improved significantly. Leaders have less need to deal with behaviour that does not meet the school's high standards. The school does have a small number of pupils who can find self-control difficult. Plans to support these pupils are highly effective and staff manage rare incidents of unwelcome behaviour consistently well. The school works well with specialist outreach services to ensure that pupils can stay in school and be successful. The school's commitment to inclusion is clear, and parents see this as a strength of the school.
- Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. During this inspection, key stage 2 sports day was a hive of activity. Pupils moved between activities independently, showing strong self-discipline despite the obvious excitement. During assembly, pupils listened carefully to their Year 5 peers, bowed their heads in deep reflection for the prayer pupils had written and left the hall in exemplary fashion.
- Leaders have been successful over time in improving pupils' attendance, including the disadvantaged. However, there are a very small number of pupils whose attendance is significantly affecting the levels of absence across the school. Leaders work well with other professionals and are using formal processes to ensure that this small number of pupils attend regularly. Punctuality across the school is good, as pupils value school and are keen to learn.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points across the school. Leaders, including governors, are clear that older pupils in the school have not had consistently good teaching historically. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils and know which groups of pupils need to catch up. Gaps across the school are closing.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected levels in Year 1 has been increasing year on year. In 2015, the proportion was above the national average. Current pupils are on track to achieve the same. Almost all pupils who have retaken the phonics screening check in Year 2 met the expected standard.
- The progress of pupils in key stage 1 has increased significantly since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels at the end of Year 2 has been increasing under the current leadership. In 2015, the proportions achieving expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly the same as seen nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils currently in Year 2 had a significantly lower starting point than non-disadvantaged pupils. At the end of their Reception Year, less than half of these pupils had reached a good level of development, compared to three quarters of their peers. This gap has reduced considerably across in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able pupils in key stage 1 make good progress. The proportions of pupils working beyond levels that are typical for their age have increased, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders have provided additional teaching to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in Year 4. At the end of key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils were doing significantly less well than their peers. Only a third of pupils had reached the expected levels in writing and mathematics. Current gaps have reduced significantly as the proportion of disadvantaged pupils working within age-related expectations has increased rapidly.
- Standards have been rising significantly in reading, writing and mathematics since 2013. In 2015, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaching expected levels was above national averages for all, including disadvantaged pupils. The proportions of pupils working above the expected levels increased in mathematics, doubled in reading and more than doubled in writing, as a result of leaders' sharp focus on the most able. The proportion of current Year 6 pupils working within age-related expectations has increased significantly since these pupils were in Year 2. All disadvantaged pupils who do not have special educational needs and/or disabilities are working within age-related expectations. Gaps have closed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. The school track the progress of these pupils closely. The work in pupils' books shows demonstrable progress across all subjects.

Early years provision

is good

- Children in the Reception Year have a strong start. Good teaching ensures that all children make good progress and those children who are behind catch up quickly. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the range of activities is stimulating.
- The majority of children start school with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. At the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is consistently above the proportion seen nationally and current pupils are on track to achieve the same.
- Leadership in the early years is good. Leaders are reflective about what is working and what could be even better. For example, this year, boys had significantly lower starting points in almost every area of the curriculum. This gap has almost closed because staff prioritised improving the communication, language and literacy skills of boys. Leaders also ensure that the most able children are challenged. The proportion of current children exceeding levels that are typical in reading has doubled.
- Disadvantaged children make good progress in the early years. The additional funding the school receives to support these children is used effectively. Leaders use what they know about children's starting points to plan extra support across the curriculum and as a result there is no significant difference in the achievement of disadvantaged children.
- Children develop strong personal and social skill in the early years. School leaders have made this a priority, as they felt that not all pupils in key stage 1 were school-ready in the past. Current pupils are purposeful when working with adults and also able to work on tasks independently. Children respond well to adults' high expectations.
- Leaders ensure that new children settle well. Relationships with local pre-schools are effective and visits through the summer help new children to make a good start in the autumn. Children now leave the Reception Year ready for Year 1.
- Parents are actively involved in their children's learning. Parents contribute 'wow' moments from home to their child's assessments in school and are invited to see their children's learning at first hand during scheduled drop-in sessions.

School details

Unique reference number	135164
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10012335

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Kerr
Headteacher	Caroline Powell
Telephone number	01892 520582
Website	www.rusthall-cep.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@rusthall-cep.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 March 2014

Information about this school

- Rusthall St Paul's is an average-sized primary school.
- A third of pupils are entitled to the pupil premium and this is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by the school is below the national average.
- The breakfast club is not run by the governing body and was not included in this inspection.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, including some jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons, and at displays and work in books showing progress over time.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority and with governors.
- Parents' views were considered through the 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and in conversations with parents at the beginning of the school day. The views of staff were considered through the 17 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and through meetings.
- Pupil's views were considered through the 50 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, through a meeting with pupils and by talking to pupils around the school.
- Inspectors observed breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness, improvement plans, records of local authority and governors' monitoring, and leaders' analysis of the quality of teaching, pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, case studies and the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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