

Rusthall St Paul's CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135164
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	381822
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2012
Lead inspector	Lynda Welham

This inspection of the school 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	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graeme Anderson
Headteacher	Carolyn Cohen
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	25–26 June 2012
Inspection number	381882



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Introduction

Inspection team

Lynda Welham

Additional Inspector

Peter Lawley

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The team observed 15 lessons taught by 9 teachers. Discussions were held with senior staff, teachers, members of the governing body, parents and carers and pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's improvement plan, policies and records of pupils' progress and attainment. The inspection team considered 74 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This average-sized primary school opened in 2007 following an amalgamation of the junior and infant schools situated on the site. The school operates from two buildings on the same site. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. More pupils than usual enter or leave the school other than at the expected times. Most pupils are White British and the proportion from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The governing body is responsible for the breakfast club organised for pupils in the school. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Since the last inspection the senior leadership team and the governing body have been restructured and several new teachers have joined the school. The school has the Healthy School award and Eco-School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory and improving school. It is not yet good as the quality of teaching does not ensure good progress, particularly in writing. Improvement planning in subjects lacks rigour, and accountability for performance is not yet well embedded and established in school practice. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Attainment has been rising over a period of time from broadly average to securely average, and attainment for the current Year 2 pupils is above average. Achievement is less secure in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing, although there are marked improvements in all subjects this year.
- Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Sometimes the pace of learning slows when pupils spend too long listening and lack opportunities to work independently. Targets for improvement are not always used effectively, as when marking does not make clear how pupils can improve their work. Teachers do not always check that pupils are acting on the advice given.
- Pupils' behaviour and the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory overall. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are often good, except when the lesson pace slows and low-level disruption occasionally occurs. Pupils feel the school keeps them safe and almost all parents and carers agree with them.
- The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are satisfactory. Analysis of progress data by senior leaders is rigorous, but improvement planning in subjects lacks quantifiable criteria to measure impact. The governing body is not yet fully effective at holding the school to account for its performance. Senior leaders monitor teaching regularly, but developmental feedback is not always specific enough.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the overall quality of teaching so that it is good or better to

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accelerate pupils' progress and achievement, particularly in writing, by:

- sharing more widely the good practice that exists in the school
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons and the balance between teacher-talk and pupils having time to work independently
 - providing pupils with clear targets for their next steps in learning and ensuring that marking, particularly in English lessons, is always of good quality, reflecting what pupils have achieved against their individual targets and what they have to learn.
- Improve accountability and strategic planning by:
- ensuring that the school's improvement planning by subject leaders includes measurable success criteria so that they can be held fully to account
 - rigorously monitoring lessons to ensure that developmental feedback for teachers is implemented, so that expectations are raised and consistency established
 - providing training to governors so that they are better able to access the full range of assessment data available to them, compare the school's achievement to that of schools nationally, and hold the school to account and challenge the school on its performance better.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

From starting points below those expected for their age, pupils make good progress and achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. Rigorous application of the school's phonics (letters and sounds) programme, from entry to the end of Year 2, ensures that pupils make good progress in their reading. They enter Year 1 with standards close to those expected nationally in all areas of learning. Their achievement in Key Stage 1 has risen year on year and the current Year 2 pupils achieved above average standards in reading, and considerably above average in mathematics and writing in national tests. Evidence from observations and pupils' work indicate that this pattern is set to continue. The school has been successful in closing the attainment gap in writing between boys and girls in Key Stage 1.

Achievement at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory; it has been too variable over time. Some inconsistencies remain but achievement is on an upward trajectory. This is confirmed by the school's reliable analysis of pupils' performance, and lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Despite a dip in attainment at the end of Year 6 last year, related to those pupils' standards on entry, pupils have typically attained standards which are broadly average in mathematics and reading, but below average in writing by the time they leave school. However, the achievement of current pupils in Key Stage 2 shows a rapidly improving picture. The vast majority of pupils are on track to achieve at least in line, with a notable percentage above national expectations in

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English and mathematics, although fewer in writing than in reading. In reading, pupils show an increasingly positive attitude to literature and an improving picture is emerging with regards to the development of higher order skills. Pupils' skills in mathematics have improved as a result of the school's focus on identification and targeted support for them, including for the more able. Pupils are able to demonstrate their growing ability to use their calculation skills in real life situations, such as manipulating numbers to work out how best to group each class into teams for Key Stage 2 sports day. Further improvements are needed to embed rapid and consistent progress in writing across the key stage. In the best practice, work is challenging, sufficient writing time is provided and opportunities to redraft are plentiful. These features are not yet present in all lessons.

There are no significant differences in the progress that different groups of pupils make, including pupils eligible for free school meals, due to the school's careful tracking of pupils' progress. Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs or whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement make satisfactory progress from well-directed support by teachers and well-qualified teaching assistants. Pupils who join the school other than at expected times are accurately assessed so that they can be supported to make progress in line with others.

Inspection findings that progress is not consistent enough to be judged good are not fully endorsed by parents and carers who consider their children do well. However, inspectors recognise that progress and achievement are showing marked improvement.

Quality of teaching

Teaching over time is, typically, satisfactory, but there is much good practice which parents, carers and pupils themselves recognise. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. In the best lessons, pupils' imagination and thinking skills are fully engaged. For example, in a science lesson in Year 2, pupils were challenged to ask questions about the Goldilocks picnic and were excited to investigate how quickly their drinks would cool. They then carefully used thermometers to record accurate measurements at regular intervals.

Where learning is less successful, it is because there is too much teacher talk and pupils spend too long listening. As a consequence, learning slows, pupils are not given opportunities to benefit from collaboration with each other before answering questions, and they lack time to work independently. Some lessons produce outcomes which do not accurately reflect pupils' abilities because pupils are not challenged enough to use their skills, particularly in writing. Pupils' books are regularly marked and some good pointers for improvement made, but teachers' suggestions are often not followed up and writing, including in English lessons, is not always redrafted to reflect the guidance given.

Pupils' moral and social development is promoted by opportunities for pupils to work

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together and they cooperate with each other well. This was particularly evident when the whole school contributed to an 'Olympic Opening Ceremony'. Pupils responded well to this helpful learning opportunity, showed excellent self-discipline, supported one another well, especially in the way Year 6 helped the youngest pupils, and worked cooperatively in a drama presentation depicting the range of competitions in the forthcoming Olympics.

Teachers and well-qualified teaching assistants provide appropriate support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs through a range of generally successful interventions where pupils work in small groups. There is also effective teacher-led small group work in writing for more-able pupils. Other specific initiatives, such as the school's detailed programme to help pupils who are behind with reading to catch up, are successful. The teaching of reading is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 through the adoption of specialist programmes. The introduction of a similar programme, especially targeted at Key Stage 2, is enhancing teachers' effectiveness in supporting reading development and pupils' pleasure in reading, as well as raising their achievement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

As a result of the school's robust efforts, attendance is broadly average. The school works in close partnership with its education welfare service to support parents and carers in ensuring their children attend regularly. The vast majority of children say they are happy to come to school and find behaviour appropriate.

Pupils are extremely polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. The school is typically a calm and well-ordered environment. Behaviour for learning is satisfactory overall; it is not good because a few pupils display low levels of disruptive behaviour when teaching allows the pace of learning to slow. Incidents of bullying, although infrequent, do occur but are handled quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils understand different types of bullying and how such behaviour can impact on others. They are taught how to keep themselves safe from different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, in assemblies and the taught curriculum. Almost all pupils say that they feel safe in school and that school is a 'friendly place'.

Even the youngest children understand the importance of sharing and cooperating, as when they worked together to resolve a conflict over the number of children who could dress up in a favourite 'superhero' costume. The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children feel safe at school and that school deals effectively with bullying, including racist bullying. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'The school has a happy, productive, inclusive atmosphere.' Despite this, a very small minority of parents and carers do not feel that the school deals well enough with their own children's behaviour or that of a small minority of pupils. Inspection evidence shows that the school records incidents of poor behaviour and responds appropriately to parental concerns. The headteacher has taken action to ensure that pupils are well supervised at lunchtimes by employing a professional sports coach to organise lunchtime games and activities and this initiative has

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reduced the number of playtime incidents of poor behaviour.

Leadership and management

Leaders set ambitious targets for pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers are held to account for pupil performance through regular progress review meetings. Where pupils are falling behind, appropriate strategies are put in place and robustly evaluated for impact, ensuring that any indication of underachievement is addressed. The senior leadership team is contributing well to school improvement, notably in the meticulous collection and analysis of progress and attainment data. Consequently, there is no difference between the achievement of various groups in the school and equality of opportunity is ensured. Any indication of discrimination is tackled vigorously. Subject leaders are wholly committed to raising achievement in their areas, but the quality of their improvement planning varies and improvement plans lack the specific and measurable success criteria linked to attainment which are necessary to ensure that the school is held to account rigorously. Nevertheless, the school has demonstrated that it has the capacity to improve further through pupils' notable improvement in achievement in Key Stage 1, an improving trend of achievement in Key Stage 2 and because the behaviour for learning of most pupils is usually positive.

Leaders work to improve the quality of teaching and provide well-directed professional development opportunities for teachers and other staff. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly, but there is not always sufficient rigour in ensuring that developmental feedback is implemented as a matter of course to help eradicate inconsistencies in teaching. Although there is good and better teaching it is not yet not shared well enough across the school.

Restructuring of the governing body has ensured that the monitoring responsibilities of specific subjects are now clearer. Governors receive detailed assessment data and information from a range of sources, but have identified the need for training to be better at interpreting the data so that they can analyse the school's performance against schools nationally and, in doing so, more rigorously hold the school to account. Governors and school leaders ensure systems for safeguarding pupils meet requirements.

The broad and balanced curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to extend their skills, including writing skills, across subjects such as history and science. A particular strength of the curriculum is the range of before- and after-school clubs, including the breakfast club which is popular, well attended, and offers good opportunities for social interaction between pupils and with adults before the start of the school day. Opportunities are provided by the school for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to learn a musical instrument. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for through opportunities to develop their sense of responsibility and leadership skills through the school council, peer mentoring, play leaders, book and lunch buddies and house captains.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's CofE VA Primary School, Tunbridge Wells TN4 8RZ

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school when I visited you recently with my colleague. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you, especially watching your version of the opening ceremony of the Olympics. We also enjoyed seeing your work in lessons. You told us, and we agree, that adults take good care of you and that your school is a friendly and safe place to learn in. Many of you told us that you enjoy school, especially the various clubs that take place.

Your school is satisfactory. You are making satisfactory progress, but there are good signs of improvement. We have asked your headteacher and staff to improve your school further by doing the following things.

- Help teachers to share their good ideas with each other for teaching, especially in the teaching of writing so that all teaching becomes good or better.
- Make sure that you are not sitting on the carpet for too long listening to your teachers before you start your independent work.
- Ensure teachers' marking helps you to improve your work and that you know the next steps to take in your learning to make good progress, particularly in writing.
- Governors should find out even more how well the school is improving so they can help it move forward.
- Be sure that when teachers are given pointers for improvement they put it into practice and that when subject leaders plan improvement they have a way of measuring how good that improvement is.

You can play your part in this by always behaving well in lessons and doing your very best.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Lynda Welham
Lead inspector

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