

Rucstall Primary School

Holbein Close, Basingstoke, RG21 3EX

Inspection dates 5 – 6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- School leaders are doing a good job in improving teaching. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress, often from a low starting point.
- Lively and effective teaching thoroughly engages pupils. Teachers, ably supported by teaching assistants, carefully match work to pupils' various abilities and needs. Teachers are skilled at pitching work at the right level for pupils and spurring them on to do their best.
- Pupils say they love school and this is obvious in their enthusiasm for learning and their excellent behaviour.
- Parents and carers are happy to leave their children in the school's care, knowing that they are safe and looked after very well.
- The headteacher inspires staff and has the confidence of pupils and parents and carers. The deputy headteacher provides strong support and is an excellent role model for teachers.
- School leaders keep a sharp eye on the quality of teaching and carefully track how well pupils are getting on. They are quick to respond where the teaching needs improving and provide effective support and training for staff.
- The curriculum is planned imaginatively and includes many activities which interest pupils and promote their learning and personal development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The more able pupils do not make as rapid progress in writing and mathematics as they do in reading.
- The wide range of assessment information is not always interpreted succinctly to provide staff and governors with the information they need at their fingertips when discussing pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, eight of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They listened to pupils reading and discussed their reading habits and preferences with them.
- The inspectors discussed various aspects of the school with pupils and looked at a range of their work. They took account of the school’s data on pupils’ attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- During the inspection, the inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the online Parent View survey, the school’s recent parental survey and their discussions with parents and carers. They took account of the 21 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement, teachers’ plans, safeguarding arrangements, records relating to behaviour and attendance, governing body minutes and records of the school leaders’ monitoring of lessons.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Lynda Walker

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is broadly average in size. Most pupils are White British, with around 10% from minority ethnic groups. A below average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for whom the school receives additional funding through pupil premium, is below average. (The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents and carers serving in the armed forces and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs (supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs) is broadly average. These needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties. A small number of pupils have physical disabilities, including cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- No pupils from the school attend alternative provision.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes: Reception and Year 1, Years 1 and 2, Years 2 and 3, Years 3 and 4, Years 4 and 5 and Years 5 and 6. Within this structure, Reception and Year 1 pupils are often taught separately and older pupils are frequently split into ability groups for English and mathematics.
- A pre-school shares the same site. This is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of the more able pupils in writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring they are set increasingly challenging work
 - promoting their independence through more open-ended tasks to help them extend their thinking and deepen their understanding.
- Provide a succinct and easily understood summary of pupils' progress and attainment for staff and governors to help them monitor pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- As children enter Reception class, their social, language and number skills are generally well below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress in Reception and continue well through each year so that by Year 6, levels of attainment in English and mathematics are generally average or above.
- The systematic teaching of phonics (the sounds letter make) gives pupils confidence in tackling unfamiliar words. Year 1 pupils' scores in last year's phonics check were above average. Pupils in Year 2 showed a strong interest in books and were keen to read to the inspectors. They increasingly use commas, paragraphs and speech marks appropriately. When reviewing a book, for example, one pupil wrote, 'It is a fantastic book; I love the illustrations. It's hilarious!'
- Across Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in mathematics, especially in counting, doubling and halving small numbers. They quickly learn to count in twos, fives and 10s and they go on to use these skills when tackling early work in multiplication and division.
- By Year 6, pupils read fluently and show insights into plots and characters. They develop increasingly sophisticated skills in writing, using a variety of ways to engage the reader. For example, one boy used a rhetorical question and a simile effectively as he wrote, 'Have you ever seen a spy? Well of course not because they go unseen like masters of stealth, trained to be awesome.'
- In mathematics, pupils' learning moves on apace. By Year 6, they use their good knowledge of multiplication tables to solve complex problems and through practical work, and gain a secure understanding of mathematical relationships, for example, that between the circumference and diameter of a circle.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics is rising steeply, particularly in Key Stage 1, but the school is rightly sustaining efforts to bring pupils' progress in these areas in line with the rapid progress they make in reading.
- Pupils with moderate learning difficulties or other needs, including speech and language problems, make good gains in their learning due to highly effective support. For example, during a lesson which included physically disabled and partially sighted pupils, all groups made very good headway in understanding fractions through a range of practical activities.
- The gap between the progress of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium and other pupils is closing rapidly. Indeed, the school's current tracking, using average point scores¹, up to and including Year 6, shows a very similar picture for both groups.

The quality of teaching is good

- Children's learning in the Reception class is well supported through a wide range of opportunities for play, together with good teaching of key skills in communication and language, and mathematics. Adults establish warm relationships and support learning effectively within the well-equipped indoor and outdoor areas.
- Flexible grouping, aided by the design of the building, enables teachers to gather pupils together according to their ability. For example, very able Year 3 pupils work alongside much older pupils in the top mathematics set. This means they are suitably challenged and make very good progress.
- Teachers are skilled in setting tasks based on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding, which means all groups of pupils are well supported and challenged. In the most effective lessons, teachers set open-ended tasks, such as asking younger pupils to devise their own number sequences. Occasionally, although they are set quite demanding work, the more able

¹ Average point scores are calculated using an agreed scale for each National Curriculum level.

pupils cope rather easily.

- Prompts for learning displayed in every classroom are used very effectively. During a debate in the top English set which focused on their use of standard English, pupils used reminders about suitable vocabulary to good effect. They opened their arguments with phrases such as, 'It has been suggested...', 'It could be argued that...' and 'Hence, I maintain that...'
- As a result of lively and stimulating teaching, pupils are almost always fully engaged and eager to participate. Year 2 pupils, for example, were keen to proof read a text: 'It needs an apostrophe', said one; and 'There's a "w" in bowling!' said another, emphatically.
- Teachers often have 'pit stops' during lessons where, through skilful questioning, they encourage pupils to explain what they have learned so far, and provide further tips for them to complete the tasks. On the other hand, teachers are careful not to spoon-feed. After a brief introduction, a teacher set pupils off working, saying, 'I'm not going to give too much away.'
- Teachers do their utmost to interpret the curriculum in ways that appeal to pupils. For example, when learning how to calculate equivalent metric and imperial units, pupils devised recipes including 150 grams of dragons' scales and 50 millilitres of crocodile tears.
- Pupils receive excellent feedback through teachers' marking. Teachers go to great lengths to praise and encourage pupils, at the same time pointing out how even really good work could be improved. Because pupils have a good idea of what is expected, they are increasingly able to assess their own work and that of their classmates, contributing to an atmosphere of mutual learning.
- A wide range of successful teaching strategies, including very effective support by teaching assistants, enables pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. The parent and staff surveys were overwhelmingly positive about pupils' behaviour. The school is a welcoming, happy and harmonious community.
- Pupils are exceptionally keen to learn. For example, Reception class children eagerly showed their maps of Red Riding Hood's journey, and delighted in repeating the familiar phrases, such as 'Grandma, what big eyes you've got!' Older pupils enthusiastically discussed their favourite authors.
- Pupils try their best and are mutually supportive. Seeing his friend struggling, one pupil said encouragingly, 'Come on, you can do it!' Pupils listen attentively and show great eagerness when working in pairs or small groups. They move into different teaching areas without fuss which means lessons start promptly.
- Parents and carers are highly confident that their children are looked after well. Pupils feel extremely safe and are convinced that bullying is rare. They have a good understanding and awareness of the different forms of bullying such as name-calling and bullying based on gender or background. They are aware of the potential pitfalls of using the internet and know that adults will help them should they have any concerns.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is clear from their improving attendance rate, which is now above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's pivotal role in driving improvement is widely acclaimed by staff, parents and carers, governors and the local authority. Aply supported by a talented and energetic deputy she has successfully created a shared ambition to ensure all pupils do as well as they can.
- The school's commitment to equal opportunities and fostering good relations is evident at every

turn. The progress of individuals and groups is meticulously recorded and analysed; teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress is accelerating.

- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and provide constructive advice and further training where required. Successful methods are quickly spotted and shared across the school. For example, the use of 'pit stops' during lessons was seen to be highly effective and this was adopted by all teachers. As a result of such strategies, the quality of teaching is continuously improving.
- School leaders keep comprehensive files of pupils' progress and attainment. Some of this information is rather complex and unwieldy which means it is not always easy to interpret by staff and governors.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted successfully. For example, debating the pros and cons of the 12A film classification gave pupils the opportunity to consider moral dilemmas. Activities such as playing in the orchestra, creating batiks and studying Africa, raises pupils' cultural awareness.
- This school has benefited from well-targeted support from local authority staff over recent years. The local authority now considers Rucstall to be an effective school in need of minimal external support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors play a supportive role in helping drive forward improvements to pupils' achievement and teaching. They are well informed and increasingly ask probing questions about how well pupils are doing compared to national expectations and averages. Governors seek assurance that salary levels are matched to teachers' responsibilities and effectiveness. They contribute to discussions on how the pupil premium funding should be spent, and have recently begun to check on the impact on the pupils' progress of the extra support provided for those eligible. Governors are well trained and meet all their responsibilities well, including the statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	106040
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	405618

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 – 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Hurley
Headteacher	Monica Barker
Date of previous school inspection	9 – 10 March 2011
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