

Russells Hall Primary School

Overfield Road, Russells Hall Estate, Dudley, DY1 2NX

Inspection dates

24–25 September 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make excellent progress during their time in school, and their achievement has been consistently outstanding over several years.
- From often low starting points, pupils reach above-average standards by the end of Year 6. Some reach particularly high standards in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who are supported by additional funding, including the pupil premium, do especially well.
- Teaching is outstanding. Lessons are challenging and enjoyable, focus on developing high levels of literacy and numeracy to prepare pupils for their further education, and benefit from exceptional support from teaching assistants.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding, and relationships are excellent at all levels. Pupils feel safe and enjoy a wide range of exciting learning activities.
- The attendance of a small minority of pupils is not good enough, despite the school's efforts to improve it.
- Leaders ensure that their high expectations and ambitions for the school are shared by all staff. They are very effective in constantly improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The governing body is challenging and supportive and plays a significant role in driving improvement.
- Parents are very pleased with the school, but leaders agree that the information provided to them could be improved.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Five of these lessons were observed jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, seven governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They examined the school's development plans, checks on how well it is doing, safeguarding arrangements, health and safety records, school policies and a range of pupils' work and information about their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also held informal discussions with parents before school.
- The inspectors examined 36 questionnaires from members of staff.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector
Roisin Chambers	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Russells Hall Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British, the remainder coming from a range of other ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- Nearly half of the pupils are supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for particular groups, such as children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is organised into 14 single-year classes.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club, managed by the governing body.
- Members of the school management team are involved in assisting and supporting St Marks CE Primary School at the invitation of the local authority.
- The previous headteacher retired at the end of the summer term, and the deputy headteacher has taken over as acting headteacher until a permanent appointment is made.
- There have been a number of changes of staff since the previous inspection five years ago.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the procedures for improving attendance, so it rises within the next 12 months to at least the national average.
- Improve the strategies for providing information, so all parents feel that they are fully informed about their children's activities and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter Reception with skills and understanding much lower than those expected for their age, especially in language development and knowledge of the world. They make outstanding progress across the school, and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 standards are above average levels. An increasing number of pupils are reaching particularly high standards in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in all year groups. Almost all pupils make the progress expected nationally for their age, and many exceed it. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and especially the high number who have a statement of educational needs. More-able pupils consistently reach the high levels of which they are capable.
- High levels of attainment and achievement have been the norm in the school for at least six years. Standards have risen every year except 2010, and those reached in 2013 were the highest of all. The work seen during the inspection shows that the large majority of pupils are continuing to make exceptional progress throughout the school.
- Most pupils supported through the pupil premium reach levels of attainment in English and mathematics that are similar to, or higher than, those of other pupils. In 2013, for example, more of these pupils exceeded nationally expected levels in mathematics by the end of Year 6 than other pupils. Their outstanding progress means that by the time they leave there is no longer a gap between their attainment and that of other groups.
- This group's excellent performance is a direct result of extra teaching paid for by pupil premium funding. In particular, intensive support from excellent teaching assistants is constantly directed to the needs of each individual pupil. This was exemplified in a Year 6 class, where high-quality help and guidance from the teacher and three assistants ensured that all pupils made at least good progress in their learning of punctuation and development of confidence through speaking.
- Successful achievement in writing was seen in several lessons. In another Year 6 class, pupils were encouraged to use their imagination and observation skills when writing about a mysterious house they had seen in a video.
- Although reading standards have been slightly lower than those in writing and mathematics, school leaders have recognised this. They have responded by providing more effective resources and 'saturation' teaching. Pupils who find reading difficult, in Year 6 for example, are heard reading three times a day. Standards have risen correspondingly in the last two years and are now at a similar level to the other subjects.
- Pupils enjoy reading widely. They have many regular opportunities to read to adults in school, and all are provided with detailed reading folders in which both they and adults record progress regularly and immaculately.
- Pupils also achieve well across a range of other subjects, including music and French. Excellent art displays are evident throughout the whole school, and provide a constantly stimulating and colourful learning environment for the school community.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently at least good and often outstanding across the school. This has been the case for a number of years, enabling pupils to maintain high levels of progress in their learning.
- Teaching has been so effective because teachers and teaching assistants have an excellent knowledge of the needs of all their pupils, and leaders have successfully developed a strong and well-understood structure for learning. This enables new staff to settle quickly to the traditionally high expectations of the school.
- The records of pupils' progress are extensive and of high quality, and are constantly used to drive learning and achievement. Consequently children in the Early Years make rapid progress in all areas of their learning, often from low starting points, because adults know precisely the learning needs of each child. This was seen during a lesson when children were learning how to make biscuits, which gave them opportunities to develop social, speaking and mathematical skills in an exciting challenge.
- Children's outdoor learning opportunities have greatly improved since the last inspection. Adults give them many interesting activities to stimulate their learning.
- Teaching throughout the rest of the school is challenging, imaginative and creative, and this is a major factor in the development of pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. This was seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 5 when pupils were absorbed in a practical activity learning about different shapes and their properties.
- Relationships are excellent, and pupils always have an adult to turn to if they have problems with their work. Great respect and friendship between teachers and their pupils help to support pupils when they are set targets and next steps in their learning.
- Teachers also support each other strongly in developing their skills. This was especially evident during the inspection when a number of teachers new to teaching expressed great appreciation of the guidance and help they were receiving from leaders and senior colleagues.
- An exceptional feature of teaching is the contribution of the teaching assistants. They have tremendous passion in their ambitions for the development of every pupil. They seize every opportunity to further their own skills through training, and are observed throughout the school working intently and successfully with individual pupils, whole classes and groups. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit especially from their support.
- Teachers strongly promote effective use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the school in all subjects. This prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have already recognised correctly that pupils could be encouraged more to develop their speaking skills through more frequent opportunities and more open questioning. Their monitoring of this development is already showing some improvement in these skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. This is because they are provided with a wide range of challenging, practical and interesting learning activities. This includes their learning of basic language and mathematical skills. The older pupils especially understand the importance of their

education. Some said, 'It will help us when we are older.'

- Pupils say they enjoy many different aspects of their learning. These include the science week of engineering and inventions, the 'maths games on Fridays', 'the masks of endangered animals we made in art', and especially the residential trip to Shrewsbury.
- They also talk about the many games opportunities they are now experiencing through the new sports funding for primary schools. The school has already bought in outside expertise for sports and health education in order to boost pupils' physical development. This is also helping to improve pupils' behaviour through their greater understanding of how to work in teams.
- An outstanding feature of pupils' behaviour and attitudes is their great enthusiasm for reward badges. These good-quality badges encourage great determination in pupils to win them for a range of reasons. Accordingly some wear them rather like mayoral chains, and they are adamant that these awards 'make us work harder'.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is nearly always outstanding because they want to do well, and are challenged in their work. They work well in pairs, groups or independently, as often happens when developing their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics).
- Pupils say they are safe, and this was confirmed unanimously by parents and staff. This was also seen when they were outside or moving around the two-storey school. They say that there are no problems with bullying, because 'we have all learned about it in anti-bullying week, it sinks in so people stop'. They have a good awareness of cyber-bullying and the dangers from the internet and mobile phones, showing considerable caution.
- Most pupils have a very good knowledge of their learning targets, which feature prominently in lessons. Older pupils have a detailed knowledge of the levels they are reaching, and are expected to reach, in English and mathematics.
- Although punctuality is good, attendance remains below average. This is due in the main to the poor attendance of a small minority of pupils. In spite of the sympathetic efforts of the learning mentor linking with families, and a range of attendance procedures, progress remains slow. School leaders readily accept that in spite of the barriers faced by some families, this is an area that can still be improved.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Although the long-serving headteacher retired at the end of last term, she has left the school in capable and experienced hands. All the senior management team remain in place, including the deputy headteacher who is now the acting headteacher. These leaders were all an integral part of a successful leadership team for a number of years. This has ensured that the school has remained outstanding, but is continually seeking improvement.
- The school has an excellent record of identifying priorities for improvement, such as boys' reading, girls' attainment in mathematics, and supporting less-able pupils in particular year groups. Identification is rapidly followed by action plans which in almost all cases lead to rapid and sustained improvement.
- The leaders make sure that the needs of all staff are fully catered for, and they respond with great vigour and expertise. All show considerable pride in the school, and shared aspirations for all pupils to be provided with education and care of the highest standard.

- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding, and have been instrumental in successfully preparing children for a very effective transition from Reception to Year 1.
- A major priority for the school has always been to create and maintain the highest quality of teaching. This has been achieved through regular and positive monitoring of teaching, and the establishment of a flexible system of teaching and support for all pupils according to their individual needs. Pupils are often taught intensively in small groups, where they have frequent one-to-one guidance from adults.
- The high quality of senior leaders' teaching is used as an exemplar for staff from the school and another school locally. This is especially important now after the introduction of a number of staff new to teaching. Encouragingly, parents are very pleased with the start that has been made by their children since the changes.
- The school has an excellent track record of promoting excellent teaching that results in consistently high achievement by all groups of pupils, especially those supported by the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and more-able pupils.
- The many rich and varied learning opportunities, and pupils' excellent behaviour, have considerably strengthened their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The local authority has a very high regard for the school, and is delighted with its contribution elsewhere in the authority. Any support the authority provides to the school is usually by request.
- The school makes many efforts to reach out to parents who may need encouragement to be involved with their children's education. However, this is not always successful, and there is some inconsistency in parents' views on the quality of information they receive from the school. School leaders accept that this can be improved, and are already planning, for example, to upgrade the school website.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors play a full and active role in the life of the school. A number, including the Chair, have served the school for many years. They have an immense pride in the achievements of the school, and emphasise its great importance and standing in the local community. They hold the school to account for its performance and are very thoughtful about decisions on the way forward. Governors monitor pupil premium spending carefully, and are very conscious of ensuring that eligible pupils reach the same levels as others, so that the school gives value for money. They are developing their skills, through training, in making sure that staff performance is linked to any pay rises, particularly in relating the quality of teaching to pupils' progress and school targets. The governors are fully informed about safeguarding, and ensure that policies and practices fully meet national requirements.

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	103813
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	427116

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	336
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy Glews
Headteacher	Jennifer Brown
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 May 2008
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