

The Russell School

Brushwood Drive, Chorleywood, Rickmansworth, WD3 5RR

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not yet good because

- Leaders and governors are aware of the school’s strengths and weaknesses, but they have not ensured sustained improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils’ achievement. This is partly because of frequent changes in staffing.
- Subject leaders are not fully effective in checking and improving the quality of teaching and pupils’ achievement in their subjects.
- Pupils’ attitudes to learning are not consistently good, particularly when teaching is not effective.
- Some teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and do not challenge them enough, especially the most-able pupils.
- Not enough pupils in Key Stage 2 make the good progress in reading, writing and mathematics of which they are capable.
- The new marking policy has not been fully implemented by all staff. Not all pupils respond to teachers’ guidance in marking and some comments do not focus attention on what would help pupils improve their work.
- The early years provision requires improvement because the recent relocation and new leadership have not yet had time to make the necessary improvements.
- Boys in the early years do not develop fast enough in reading, writing and numbers.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. This is improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils’ attainment.
- Pupils are kept safe in school. They feel safe and enjoy learning when teaching is good, especially in the early years. Their attendance is above average.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils respect adults and pupils of other backgrounds and abilities.
- Most parents, staff and pupils are confident the school is improving. Parents say their children are kept safe and that they would recommend the school to other parents.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 15 classes, including some joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books and on display around the school. They listened to pupils read individually and in groups within the classroom.
- Inspectors talked to pupils informally in the playground, in the dining hall and in groups.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's view of its own performance and the school improvement plan. They also looked at documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers and senior leaders, four governors and the School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors took account of 133 replies to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 17 staff questionnaire returns. During the inspection they also spoke with six parents in the playground at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Tania Perry	Additional Inspector
James Fuller	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Children attend the Nursery part time and the Reception class full time.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well-below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well-below average.
- The school has one class in each year group, except in Year 3, where there are two classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- There have been many changes of staff since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2014. This followed a period of turbulence in staffing and the accommodation of the Nursery class into the main building.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school, including in the early years, so that pupils' progress is consistently at least good and they achieve the standards of which they are capable, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have the highest possible expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - teachers challenge all pupils, including the most able, in reading, writing and mathematics so that they engage in their learning and make faster progress
 - making sure that teachers' marking and guidance on how pupils' should improve their work are focused on learning and that teachers check that pupils have acted upon the guidance given
 - provide more activities for boys, particularly in the early years, to develop their skills in reading, writing and number.
- Improve the leadership and management of subjects by giving subject leaders more opportunities to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress so that they can identify what needs to be done and take action to bring about improvement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Progress since the last inspection has been slowed because the school has experienced a period of instability in staffing. This has had an adverse impact on standards, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Subject leaders are not yet fully involved in improving the quality of teaching or checking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This element of their role is new to them since the appointment of the new headteacher. Leaders responsible for English and mathematics are very enthusiastic about their work and the training they are receiving from the headteacher and the local authority is supporting them in their roles. However, the impact of this training has not yet been translated into improved achievement.
- Senior leaders' checks on teaching are focused on raising its quality and improving standards. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide guidance and training for all staff so that teaching is more effective, and provide individual support where teaching is not yet good. Teachers are held to account through targets that are linked to pupils' progress. Pupils' books show that teaching is improving and progress is now faster.
- The school's own evaluation of where it is and what needs to be improved is accurate and well focused. Strategies to manage the performance of teachers are firmly rooted in improving pupils' progress and raising their attainment. Training opportunities for all staff these are readily taken up, and teachers and other adults are now given the opportunity to observe and share good practice.
- A well-balanced curriculum caters effectively for pupils' needs and interests. Learning is enhanced by a good range of additional activities, visits and clubs. These incorporate sports and dance tuition, some of which is subsidised by the primary sport funding. Some clubs are oversubscribed, showing the growing engagement of pupils in physical activity.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used to employ a sports coach and a swimming instructor. As a result, all pupils leave the school able to swim and many go on to develop skills in life saving. Pupils are gaining higher success rates in athletic competitions in the local partner schools and the boys' and girls' football teams are very successful.
- Despite the need to provide more challenge for the most-able pupils, the school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all. For instance, through good use of the pupil premium funding, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school have narrowed and in some cases have closed.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide extra help for individual pupils. Careful monitoring has taken place to ensure that these pupils are making good progress. However, the number of pupils to which this funding applies is so small that reliable comparisons cannot be made with the progress of other pupils.
- Promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their sense of social responsibility is enhanced by working exceptionally well together and enjoying collecting for various charities. Some pupils belong to an 'eco-squad' which meets every two weeks to discuss ways to promote eco-friendly strategies; the squad is currently planning a 'waste week'. Recently pupils in Year 6 collected shoes as part of the Kenya Shoe project to raise money to send to Kenya.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is enhanced through assemblies and excellent opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument. They learn about Christianity, other world faiths and the culturally diverse nature of modern Britain. Pupils' knowledge of life in modern Britain and British values is enhanced with first-hand experience. For example, democratically elected school councillors and the election to other positions of responsibility, including the respected positions of head boy and head girl, offer these experiences. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern British society where discrimination is not tolerated.

- The new headteacher has a clear vision and a determination to improve teaching and raise attainment. The staff are now working together to ensure pupils make the best possible progress. Inspection evidence and pupils' books show improvements in attainment.
- Support from the local authority has been invaluable and very effective in helping senior leaders and governors through the period of staffing turbulence and the appointment of the headteacher. Additional time has been allocated to assist with the continuing monitoring of subject leaders and improving teaching, including in the early years. Consequently, the school is more stable and teaching and pupils' attainment are improving.
- The school has effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils and all statutory requirements in this respect are met. As a result, pupils are safe in school and say so.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully aware of the drop in standards in recent years from their competent analysis of performance data and their own observations. They sought advice from the local authority to halt this decline. Although they have taken appropriate actions which have enabled the school to turn a corner and improve standards, leadership has not been good enough to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good. However, governors have worked well with external consultants recommended by the local authority and the School Improvement Partner and are in a firm position, together with the new headteacher and other senior leaders, to move the school forward.
 - Governors visit the school regularly. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and challenge leaders effectively. Governors are aware of any groups of pupils who may be underperforming and track their progress carefully.
 - The governing body knows what the quality of teaching is and ensures that the school's systems for performance management of staff and the headteacher are robust. Governors take the performance of staff fully into account in awarding pay increases.
 - The governing body ensures that all legal requirements are met, including those for safeguarding. Governors undertake relevant training to help them succeed in their role.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In some classes, pupils' attitudes to learning are not positive. Where teaching lacks challenge, pupils' behaviour deteriorates and insufficient learning takes place. Sometimes the most-able pupils are among those who lose concentration and, consequently, do not make the progress they could.
- New strategies have been introduced to bring a consistent approach to managing behaviour. These are being effectively implemented in all classes, including the Reception class, and behaviour in lessons is improving.
- In and around the school, in the playground and in the lunch hall, pupils behave well. They are polite and listen to each other well. They are respectful to adults and willingly hold open doors for adults and pupils alike.
- Relationships between pupils and adults in many classes are good. Pupils routinely discuss ideas responsibly with partners and develop their vocabulary and speaking and listening skills. They take pride in the presentation of their work and their handwriting is good.
- Attendance is above average and continues to improve. There have not been any fixed-term exclusions in the last three years.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.

- Pupils say they enjoy school, feel safe and bullying is rare. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire and those spoken with in the playground say their children are kept safe. Pupils in Year 6 showed a good understanding of the thoughts and feelings of bullies and victims during the inspection.
- Pupils have a good understanding of most forms of prejudice and know that people should not be treated differently because of where they come from or what they look like. As a consequence, incidents of name-calling are very rare.
- Pupils are aware of Hertfordshire's 'smile and stay safe' system about what to share and not to share on the internet. School site safety is good and a close check by a governor confirms this situation.
- Older pupils have a good understanding of radicalisation and extremism. Articles from national news and through religious knowledge lessons help to relate school values to British values. Parents are encouraged to prevent their children playing inappropriate computer games at home.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. There are examples of good teaching but teaching overall requires improvement because pupils are not always engaged in their work and achieving as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics. Work is not always set to challenge pupils of all abilities with the result that not all pupils make the best possible progress.
- Teaching is improving because of the action taken by the school's leaders. The school provides relevant training, coaching with the deputy headteacher, and discussions on performance and target setting with the headteacher. Leaders have introduced new behaviour and marking guidance, which is helping teachers to improve the learning environment and accelerate pupils' progress.
- Teachers mark work regularly but the quality of feedback they provide varies too much. Their comments are not always focused on the skills and subject knowledge being taught. The guidance given often does not help pupils to understand what they have to do to improve or to correct errors. Pupils are not always given opportunity to respond to feedback, and the quality and accuracy of pupils' responses are not always checked.
- Not all teachers make the best use of data on pupils' attainment and progress to help them plan effectively for pupils' learning. The school is working with the local authority to help teachers make better use of the information available to make work challenging for pupils all abilities. However, the impact of this better use of assessment data is not yet evident throughout the whole school.
- Reading is now taught effectively in Key Stage 1. In 2014, the results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were lower than those usually attained by the pupils in the school. Pupils are developing a love of reading and are making the expected progress. However, more pupils are capable of making even faster progress so that they are better prepared for their next stage in education by the time they leave.
- Teaching assistants have received training recently to help them work more effectively with pupils who are underachieving, are disabled or have special educational needs. The training is having a positive effect, as they are better equipped to work with different groups of pupils. However, the numbers of pupils are so small and the training so recent that its impact on pupils' progress cannot yet be measured.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress made by pupils has slowed over the past three years and was weak in 2014. Pupils did not make the nationally expected rate of progress in 2014 in reading, writing or mathematics and few made more than expected progress.
- While standards have been consistently above the national averages at the end of Key Stage 1, in 2014 results showed a decline in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils meeting national expectations in

the Year 1 phonics (the sounds letters make) check was well below pupils nationally in 2013 but rose to be broadly average in 2014 because it was better taught.

- Inspection evidence and work in pupils' books show that the work of the senior leaders is bringing about accelerated progress in both key stages with consequently better attainment. Pupils currently in Year 6 are well ahead of last year's Year 6.
- The most-able pupils make similar progress to their classmates. They do not make consistently good progress across subjects because the work is sometimes too easy and teachers have not challenged them to extend and deepen their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are currently making better progress from their starting points. This is because they have new individual learning plans which highlight specific learning needs and strategies to help them make faster progress. Their progress in the past has been well below that of other pupils in the school.
- The very small number of disadvantaged pupils are currently making better progress than their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. The very few pupils in Year 6 eligible for the extra funding in 2014 means that it is not appropriate to comment on their attainment in comparison with others without identifying individual pupils.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The early years provision has suffered a period of instability. Difficulties in recruitment during the absence of the permanent teacher have required the leader to provide extra training for new staff to ensure good continuity in learning for the children. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties, the Nursery has successfully been relocated in the main building, and the early years leader is supporting supply teachers and non-teaching staff to ensure that the children are happy and develop well.
- Children enter the early years with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. In 2014, an unusual year group with almost twice as many boys as girls did not make the progress usually expected in this year group. School data indicates that children's progress will be better in the current year, but still not consistently good.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Routines are established quickly and children feel safe in the warm, caring environment, both inside and in the outside area. Adults know the children well and engage them in interesting activities, involving them continually in conversation, but this is not always focused on children's learning. Not enough opportunities are provided for boys to develop their reading, writing or number skills.
- Adults are enthusiastic and records well kept. The staff manage children's behaviour well. Children are encouraged to share equipment and play cooperatively. They are given a good introduction to the good learning behaviour now expected in the school, ensuring they are now ready to move on to Year 1 and the next steps in their education.
- The role of the early years leader is developing well, although some aspects of her role are new this year. She works closely with the Nursery team to develop their skills in assessment. The local authority has supported the leader in her new role.
- The leader is effectively engaging with parents to share ideas and to develop and landscape the outside area with some of the funding provided by the Parents' Association.

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	117098
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	456042

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doug King
Headteacher	Claire Pitt
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2012
Telephone number	01923 284272
Fax number	01923 285812
Email address	admin@russell.herts.sch.uk

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