

# The Russell School

Brushwood Drive, Chorleywood, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 5RR

## Inspection dates

27–28 April 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher is very well respected by pupils, parents and staff; she has worked extremely hard to create a popular and effective school which has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
- Governors are knowledgeable and ambitious for the school, and their decisive leadership has been a key factor in the school's recent improvement.
- Senior leaders are thorough when checking how well pupils are learning. This attention to detail has a clear impact on classroom practice so that standards continue to rise.
- The school spends additional money prudently for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress in lessons.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum and leave the school well placed for a successful start at secondary school. However, some more-able pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
- Teachers encourage pupils to make informed choices about the level of challenge in their work. Pupils respond well to this and enjoy challenging themselves.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have clear expectations about what pupils can achieve in English, mathematics and science, although there is not enough consistency in the quality of work expected from pupils in geography and history.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are clear about their responsibilities and determined to do their best to help all pupils succeed.
- Pupils learn about the benefits of a 'growth mindset' and this allows them to demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils are respectful and polite and they enjoy coming to school.
- Teachers make good use of the 'learning ladders' system, and this promotes good behaviour in lessons.
- Support staff who work in classrooms make an important contribution to the progress that pupils make, particularly those pupils who need additional support.
- Senior leaders are aware of the need to give pupils more frequent opportunities to use reasoning and problem solving to deepen their understanding, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their literacy skills by writing in sufficient depth across the curriculum.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes so that more pupils reach the highest standards expected for their different ages by making sure that:
  - pupils are given frequent opportunities to use reasoning and problem solving in order to deepen their understanding, especially in mathematics
  - pupils are given opportunities to apply their literacy skills by writing in more depth across the curriculum
  - teachers are more consistent in the quality of work they expect from pupils, especially in geography and history.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has worked diligently to raise standards, improve the quality of teaching and establish high expectations for pupils' behaviour. This has ensured that the school's reputation among parents and in the wider community has improved significantly over the last two and a half years.
- Parents and governors speak enthusiastically about the many ways in which the school has improved. Parents confirm that the headteacher has introduced new approaches to teaching, leadership and behaviour which have transformed the school into a happy, thriving, successful community in a relatively short period of time.
- Senior leaders check carefully on how well pupils are learning, by undertaking a detailed analysis of assessment information and by gathering a wide range of evidence about progress. The headteacher has made many improvements to teaching in the light of these findings. For example, the focus on a 'growth mindset' approach, coupled with 'learning ladders' and 'self-selected challenges', inspires pupils to work hard and demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons.
- The management of teachers' performance is rightly focused on improving teachers' current practice, and this has made an important difference to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. Staff value the professional development that the school provides, and senior leaders are not afraid to hold teachers to account for their performance.
- Senior leaders have rightly been focusing on improving standards in English and mathematics as a matter of priority. Science is also a strength of the school. However, the quality of work in geography and history is not as high as it could be because work in these subjects is not sufficiently demanding.
- School leaders develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils gain a sense of community and responsibility through their enthusiastic engagement in activities such as raising a large amount of money for Nepal. Year 4 pupils experience a short residential trip to learn about local geography and Year 5 pupils spend three nights at a Tudor mansion, Ufton Court, learning about local history.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and equips pupils well for the next stages of education. There are many opportunities for pupils to enjoy music, such as a school orchestra, brass, flute, wind and recorder groups and through whole-class ukulele lessons. Pupils also enjoy more formal occasions to perform their music, including at the Rickmansworth Music Festival and singing in the Young Voices Choir at the O2 Arena in London.
- Assemblies and lessons also help pupils to learn about British values. A recent focus on resilience helped pupils to discuss their own attitudes to overcoming personal challenges, while also demonstrating how to show tolerance and respect for others.
- Leaders use the physical education sports funding well. They have employed a specialist swimming teacher so that every child can have swimming lessons throughout the summer term. Pupils develop their love of sport and fitness in the school's own sports hall and by participating in competitive sport against other local schools. Pupils

also take part in an annual triathlon using the school grounds. Year 6 pupils spend a week at a residential centre where they experience adventurous activities, including climbing and abseiling.

- School leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support eligible pupils during whole-class teaching, small-group work and one-to-one support. Each pupil has an individual action plan which is carefully monitored and evaluated. Particular resources, including access to an art therapist, additional support from teaching assistants and access to childcare opportunities, enable leaders to tailor support carefully for each pupil. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning.
- The leadership of support and learning for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Leaders use funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. Senior leaders responsible for this work ensure that pupils, parents and teachers are involved in planning programmes of support. Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning and development.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders' planning for school improvement is effective and they have correctly identified the most important priorities for improvement. Leaders regularly monitor the impact of actions taken.
- School staff tackle any issues of discrimination well and foster good relationships with parents. This promotes equality of opportunity and contributes to a harmonious and friendly school. Parents commented on how quickly action was taken if any problems were reported.
- Parents strongly appreciate the work of leaders, teachers and support staff. The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school, recognising the enormous number of improvements introduced since the last inspection. As one parent said: 'I am so pleased. Mrs Pitt has done so much to improve the school. The teaching and the attention to detail is excellent.' The headteacher keeps parents well informed through regular newsletters, by updating news items on the school's website and through the school's social media account. The pupils themselves produce a monthly paper, the 'Russell Roundup', full of reports and news about the school.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors, under the skilled leadership of the highly experienced chair of governors, have played a key role in the improvement of this school. They employed an extensive and rigorous selection process to secure the appointment of the current headteacher. They have supported and challenged senior leaders to bring about much-needed improvements to teaching and behaviour. As a result of these actions, standards have risen. Governance is undoubtedly a strength of the school.
- Governors are well trained and put their professional skills to good use. Individual governors lead aspects of the school's work well, for example in relation to safeguarding. They are a visible presence around the school, especially on formal occasions, illustrated by their attendance at parent consultation evenings where they

meet and talk directly with parents.

- Governors hold senior leaders to account for the progress pupils make. They take a detailed, focused and methodical approach to information about outcomes for pupils. Governors challenge staff performance through an effective performance management system.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained in all essential aspects of child protection, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. As a result, staff are aware of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. Governors have also undertaken safeguarding training and have taken steps to improve the security of the school site, including installing new security lighting and developing a comprehensive emergency plan.
- The headteacher takes the lead role in managing safeguarding procedures. She keeps detailed and accurate records of any safeguarding concerns and ensures that, when appropriate, information is shared with the relevant external agencies. The school has developed a secure filing system that includes a useful case chronology that is kept up to date. This enables external agencies and school staff to review quickly what actions have taken place. Leaders are persistent when they are concerned for a pupil's well-being and challenge the appropriate agencies where necessary.
- Leaders devised a survey to find out more about pupils' views of safety. Using the results, governors approved plans for a new lunchtime play area which has been designed and built as a safe space for children to read, write and undertake creative activities at lunchtime.
- Parents and pupils say that the school keeps everyone safe, and inspection evidence supports these views.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers make consistently good use of the school's 'self-selected challenges' approach. This helps pupils practise making informed decisions about their own learning and develop the skills to challenge themselves in their work. Pupils respond well to this, and teachers are usually quick to intervene if pupils select work that is too easy or too difficult.
- Teachers ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes and think carefully about how they can improve their own work. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to assess their own work and to make supportive comments about their peers' achievements, so that they are helping each other to learn. Teachers mark pupils' work in line with school policy and provide opportunities for pupils to respond to marking comments.
- Specialist teachers support class teachers in the teaching of music. This ensures that many pupils learn to play instruments, participate in music groups and sing to a good

standard.

- Science is a strength of the school. The quality of work in science books shows that pupils are making good progress and are learning to develop a broad range of scientific concepts. Pupils also plan and carry out their own scientific investigations and record their findings accurately.
- Although teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in English, mathematics and science, this is not shown in history and geography. As a result, standards vary and pupils' work in these subjects is not consistently of such high quality.
- Writing opportunities are carefully planned in English lessons. Nevertheless, pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their literacy skills by writing in more depth across other areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers provide work which is more challenging for the most able pupils. However, occasionally this harder work is not understood by pupils. Also, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities in mathematics for reasoning or problem-solving activities, which would deepen all pupils' understanding further.
- Teachers provide effective learning opportunities and questions that closely match the needs of pupils. For example, in a Year 5 class, a teacher's effective planning enabled groups of pupils to explore angles through photographs of real-world objects, challenging pupils to explain, 'Where's the maths in that?' However, some opportunities are missed to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Classroom support staff make a positive contribution to lessons, particularly for those pupils who need additional support in their learning. Support staff work in partnership with teachers, using appropriate teaching resources and asking questions effectively to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Phonics teaching is well organised and effective and pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated a secure grasp of phonics knowledge.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff and governors are successful in ensuring that the school provides a safe and nurturing environment in which pupils can flourish and succeed. As a result, pupils are friendly, thoughtful and respectful.
- The school council is involved in many aspects of school life. School councillors take their responsibilities seriously and take pride in their achievements. They were involved in designing the new lunchtime, outdoor quiet area which many pupils appreciate and enjoy during playtimes.
- The head boy and head girl represent the school on many formal and informal occasions; they show visitors around the school, take a leading role in special assemblies and provide good role models for behaviour and conduct. As a result of the experiences that are provided and the good levels of responsibility they are given,

pupils are respectful and responsible.

- Pupils are well mannered, friendly and confident. In the classroom, pupils have the self-assurance to put forward their point of view and to challenge others politely but assertively. Inspectors also saw work which resulted from pupils imagining what it was like to be a historical character or someone very different from themselves.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school, including when using the internet. Pupils confidently told inspectors about e-safety and were keen to share their understanding, telling inspectors 'not to share personal details with anyone online' and 'to keep our passwords safe'. Teachers promote e-safety on a regular basis.
- Parents agree that staff give personal development and welfare a high priority. One parent commented, 'The staff always go well beyond what you would normally expect to nurture and support each child. They let pupils make sensible choices and this teaches responsibility.'

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It has improved considerably over the last two years in response to challenging teaching and leaders' insistence on high standards of conduct. Expectations are high, and pupils are quick to remind others if they are not behaving appropriately. Pupils are generally very courteous to one another and to adults.
- The school is an orderly environment and pupils walk calmly and sensibly around the school, entering and leaving lessons, the playground and assembly with due regard for school rules.
- Leaders and staff know the pupils well and take any misdemeanours seriously. Pupils understand the sanctions and rewards systems thoroughly and regularly refer to the school rules to check their conduct. For example, pupils who are required to move down the learning ladder as a result of a transgression are able to explain what has happened and what they need to do to put things right.
- While most pupils behave well during most lessons, some do occasionally become inattentive. These incidents of low-level misbehaviour, while infrequent, generally result either from a lack of understanding about their work or from an activity that is insufficiently challenging.
- Senior leaders act swiftly and effectively to address any reported incidents of bullying, derogatory language or racist comments. They keep thorough information about pupils' behaviour, and their timely interventions regarding poor behaviour have a positive impact.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and they told inspectors that they enjoy attending school. Staff are proactive in supporting families where attendance becomes an issue, and they work positively with families and pupils to promote good attendance. As a result of this vigilance, the number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased markedly over this last year.

**Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection in March 2015, outcomes for pupils have improved considerably. In the most recently published school performance tables, progress in reading at the end of Year 6 was above average when compared with other primary schools in England. Progress in writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average.
- The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 in national tests last year were well above the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics; 37% of the school's pupils attained the highest standards possible in reading, compared with 19% of pupils nationally.
- However, in writing and in mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining the highest standards possible was in line with national averages. Parents, senior leaders and governors all believe that this needs to improve, because more pupils at this school are capable of reaching this higher standard in these subjects.
- According to the school's own tracking system, and supported by evidence seen in workbooks, most pupils in the school are now making good or better progress. Nevertheless, some pupils in some year groups are not making quite as much progress as they should be. There is a slight legacy of underachievement in some year groups. Senior leaders and governors are well aware of this, and plans are in place to ensure that by the time they leave the school, these pupils will have caught up.
- Recent test results, together with inspection evidence, show that the small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school are making progress in line with other pupils nationally, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. The school has successfully used the pupil premium grant to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning that they have faced.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, starting in the early years, where staff quickly identify their additional needs and how these can best be met. The inclusion leader carefully measures the impact of intervention programmes, ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Outcomes in some subjects other than English, mathematics and science are inconsistent. Pupils' work in their topic books, especially in geography and history, is not as detailed or comprehensive as work in other areas. Teachers do not have the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve in these subjects. Nevertheless, some high-quality work was seen across the curriculum, including in French, where the Year 2 class teacher has considerable expertise and uses her knowledge to support other teachers.
- All groups of pupils, including the most able, make good progress. However, they are capable of doing even better. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to use reasoning and problem solving to deepen their understanding, especially in mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills by writing in more depth in subjects other than English and mathematics are not frequent enough. Teachers are inconsistent in their expectations of the quality of work pupils achieve in geography and history.
- Senior leaders are rightly ambitious to improve outcomes even further. They have identified that expecting even more from all pupils in some areas is one way they plan



to accomplish this.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Provision in the early years has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Children in the Nursery class and in Reception benefit from a stimulating, well-resourced learning environment. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Children make good progress from their starting points and leave well equipped for Year 1.
- Teachers plan a range of interesting opportunities that enable children to learn well and initiate their own learning. Staff questioning helps children to learn and think more deeply. For example, when working with a group designing their talking postcards about dinosaurs, the teacher asked, 'What do you think a friend would like to learn from you?' and 'How can you make your postcard exciting to listen to?' Children working out the sequence of a story were asked, 'What do you think the story was about?' and 'What happened next?' to develop their understanding.
- Children make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development has increased steadily over the last 3 years and is now consistently above the national average, including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Staff manage children's behaviour very effectively. The warm manner in which staff engage with children helps children to feel secure. Expectations and routines are well established; children are attentive to adults' instructions and behave sensibly as they learn and explore. Children know how to keep themselves safe in a tidy, well-organised environment.
- The early years leader has appropriately high expectations for individual children's achievement. An effective, carefully planned assessment and tracking system helps staff ensure that work is planned to meet children's needs and that they make good progress.
- Staff establish effective communication with parents and children from the start. One parent commented, 'My daughter settled into Reception so quickly. What might have been a scary experience was totally the opposite.' The early years leader also works well in partnership with other settings and agencies. For example, she works with colleagues in other schools to moderate assessment results, and liaises with speech therapists to help meet individual learning needs.
- Leaders make sure that children are safe, both indoors and outside. Staff carry out daily checks on all aspects of the provision that can present a risk. Any necessary repairs are quickly dealt with by the site manager.
- Plans are in place to undertake further improvements to the outdoor area, including extending the existing canopy, in order to provide more opportunities for learning outside.

## School details

Unique reference number	117098
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031364

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	261
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Doug King
Headteacher	Claire Pitt
Telephone number	01923 284272
Website	<a href="http://www.russell.herts.sch.uk">www.russell.herts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@russell.herts.sch.uk">admin@russell.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a slightly smaller than average primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British. A smaller than average proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national figure, and the proportion with an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has been receiving the standard package of support and challenge from a consultant from 'Herts for Learning', which runs school improvement services for Hertfordshire.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 25 lessons. A number of these lessons were visited jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also made some short visits to lessons as part of learning walks throughout the school.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met a group of pupils to gain their views of the school as well as speaking to pupils and parents informally.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime, in assembly, at the start of the school day and in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessments and records of pupils' progress; the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance; records of how teaching is managed; minutes of governors' meetings and records of governors' monitoring visits; the school's self-evaluation information and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (who is also the inclusion leader), subject leaders and the early years leader. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body including the chair, and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 107 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 18 staff questionnaire responses and the school's own recent parent questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Tomkins	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Kissane	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2017