

Rode Methodist VC First School

Rode, Frome, Somerset BA11 6NZ

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have undertaken extensive work to federate the school successfully with Norton St Philip Church of England First School. During this time, leaders have ensured that pupils receive a good quality of education.
- While there was some anxiety among parents during the federation process, this has evaporated. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education and care that their children receive.
- The executive headteacher is steadfast in her determination to provide pupils with the best quality of education and care.
- Senior leaders new in post are highly skilled, knowledgeable and passionate practitioners. However, it is only recently that they have had the opportunity to share this expertise more widely across the school.
- Leaders, including governors, have a clear, honest and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Detailed plans are in place to tackle weaknesses.
- The curriculum excites and motivates pupils. It enables pupils to learn skills and acquire knowledge in a range of subjects.
- Provision in the early years is good. This is because children are well looked after, taught well and make good progress.
- Most pupils make good progress. However, teachers do not consistently provide pupils with sufficient challenge to enable them, especially the most able, to make stronger progress in writing and mathematics.
- The quality of pupils' writing across the wider curriculum is too variable.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very well developed. The school's core values are threaded throughout the curriculum.
- Pupils behave extremely well. They are courteous, polite and mutually supportive. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy their learning. This is reflected in their regular attendance.
- The governing body strengthens leadership. Governors are dedicated, know the school well and are increasingly holding leaders to account.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the newly appointed senior leaders have increased opportunity to undertake their roles and responsibilities for further developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Raise achievement by ensuring that teachers consistently provide the highest levels of challenge to enable pupils, especially the most able, to make even stronger progress in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that the quality of pupils' writing is consistent across a wider range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors and staff describe the executive headteacher as 'an exceptional leader'. Despite the significant challenges and the substantial work undertaken to federate the school with Norton St Philip First School, she has ensured that pupils receive a good quality of education.
- The ambition and drive of the executive headteacher is demonstrable. Her strong leadership has galvanised the staff across the federation. There is a shared passion and determination to drive forward improvements in teaching and further raise achievement for all pupils.
- The executive headteacher is ably supported by her senior leaders. They have significant skills and the expertise to drive forward improvements. However, it is only recently that they have had the opportunity to share their expertise and carry out their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, it is too early to measure the impact of their work.
- Leaders, including governors, know their school well. Self-evaluation is accurate and is based on detailed analysis. Leaders openly recognise the school's weaknesses. They understand that by doing so they will secure the necessary improvements.
- Leaders use precise analysis of information about pupils' progress to good effect. Development plans clearly identify which areas should be improved. They describe, for example, the need to improve progress further in writing and mathematics, especially for the most able pupils.
- The school's curriculum is exciting. Leaders successfully balance the requirements of the national curriculum with the pupils' interests. As a result, pupils across the school develop a love of learning and enjoy their time in school. Cross-curricular topics are carefully chosen to enable pupils to transfer skills from subject to subject. However, the quality of pupils' writing is too variable across subjects. For example, pupils' vocabulary choices are not of the same quality in history or science as those seen in their English work.
- Pupils' learning and experience of school is richly enhanced by the wider curriculum. Pupils spoke passionately about the clubs they have the opportunity to attend. The creative arts club is a firm favourite, along with other clubs, such as gardening, creative writing and football, which are regularly attended. Pupils shared their delight with the inspector about the chance to take part in productions such as 'Cats' and the premiere of 'A Christmas Story'. Such activities bring learning to life and increase pupils' confidence.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Pupils' understanding is enhanced when learning how different countries, environments and peoples behave in different ways. For example, the use of a story about a Wild West cowboy who had lost his longhorn provided a platform for pupils to discuss Native American Indians and to learn about their culture and the importance of equality.
- Additional funding to enhance pupils' experiences of sport and physical education is used effectively. Leaders use this funding to engage the services of specialist sports coaches and improve the quality of physical education teaching. Pupils benefit from

sports leaders providing activities for them at playtimes and lunchtimes, in addition to their lessons and clubs.

- Leaders have a clear rationale for the spending of additional funding to support the few disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, there is no discernible difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is being more carefully monitored by the special educational needs leader to ensure that they make the best possible progress.
- Leaders successfully use the support provided by the Somerset Education Partnership representative to refine and develop their work further. He knows the school well, is fully aware of the areas for development and works well with leaders to tackle the improvements identified.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. Some had feared that the anxieties of the federation process would have an impact on their child's education. These fears have been quickly eradicated. Parents who responded to the online Parent View survey, wrote a message, or spoke to the inspector are full of praise for the school. They are confident that their children are receiving good teaching, are extremely well looked after and kept safe. 'We would like to record our sincere appreciation to the whole team who work so hard to give our children a first-rate education', 'My children have thrived at Rode First School', and 'I would not hesitate to recommend Rode School to a parent' are typical of the views expressed by parents.

Governance of the school

- Governance is strong. Governors have an accurate and detailed view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They increasingly provide leaders with the necessary challenge and hold them to account. Governors' challenge is informed by teachers' performance information, pupil progress information and the findings of external advisers. As a result, they know the right questions to ask and can appraise the answers to good effect.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is evident in all aspects of the school's work. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect pupils against all possible risks. Staff receive high-quality training and regular updates on keeping pupils safe. Consequently, staff are quickly able to spot concerns and take rapid action with confidence.
- Staff, irrespective of their role, know the pupils and their individual needs extremely well. Leaders carefully evaluate the risks involved with an activity, such as when pupils are travelling by minibus to Norton St Philip First School.
- Risk assessments are in place for trips and for individual pupils. These are routinely checked to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- Leaders, including governors, are aware of the importance of recruiting safely. All staff are carefully checked prior to starting employment to ensure that they are suitable to

work with children.

- Leaders fastidiously monitor all pupils and are assiduous in following up any concerns. They are 'terrier-like', leaving no stone unturned, in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. They work effectively with outside agencies to minimise the risk of harm to any pupil. Nevertheless, they would have no hesitation in escalating a concern should the need arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils enjoy their learning as a result of good teaching. Teachers are eager to engage them and encourage active participation.
- Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils know, can do and understand. They typically plan exciting activities that accurately match pupils' needs. This results in pupils' good progress.
- Pupils are inquisitive and are excited about the topics they are studying. This was exemplified in a music lesson. Pupils were inspired in the task to provide an instrumental accompaniment to a piece of circus music. Working collaboratively, they performed on their instruments with precision, showing their growing musicality to great effect.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely strong and are built on mutual respect. Pupils have the confidence to ask questions and offer their views.
- The few disadvantaged pupils are known well to staff. Teachers ensure that they plan activities carefully to meet their needs. Consequently, there is little difference between their achievement and that of their peers.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use effectively to plan learning which inspires and motivates pupils. While pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, they do not always make the strongest progress in their writing and mathematics, especially the most able pupils. Sometimes activities do not sufficiently deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in these subjects.
- Teachers typically hold high expectations for pupils' written work in English. However, in pupils' work across a range of other subjects, pupils do not demonstrate similarly high expectations of themselves as writers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The care and support of pupils are outstanding. The positive rapport between pupils and staff underpins the culture and ethos of the school. Its core values, which relate to compassion, trust, courage, hope, peace and friendship, are palpable. The school therefore develops pupils' emotional and social skills well. For example, pupils know the importance of treating each other with kindness and respect. A pupil expressed this as, 'You wouldn't want people to be mean to you.'

- The emotional well-being of pupils is a strength. Staff receive high-quality training which allows them to identify emotional changes in pupils rapidly and act quickly to support them at times of vulnerability. The training of pupils to act as peer supporters, particularly during lunchtimes and playtimes, ensures that these are happy and sociable times for pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school and say it is 'a happy place to come, as staff are really nice'. They show positive attitudes to their learning and want to do well. As a result, pupils very rarely disengage from their work.
- The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and pupils feel safe. They trust adults in the school. They are confident that any concerns or worries they may have will be listened to and quickly resolved. They receive guidance, appropriate for their age, on how to keep safe when using electronic devices. For example, they are aware of the importance of not sharing personal information when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is impressive around the school and during lessons. Pupils benefit from effective and well-considered routines and respond quickly to adult instructions. They demonstrate high levels of respect, and comment, 'We are taught from Reception to think about our behaviour.'
- Pupils clearly understand the differences between right and wrong. They understand that poor behaviour and bad language will not be tolerated. They treat each other with respect and appreciate that, while everyone is different, all are equal.
- Pupils take pride in their school. They are responsible and carefully look after their environment. As a result, the school is a tidy and orderly environment which pupils are rightly proud to belong to.
- Leaders carefully monitor attendance. The school routinely analyses patterns of attendance for different groups of pupils, including pupils who are disadvantaged. As a result, pupils attend school regularly and improvement rates, especially for the disadvantaged, have risen.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current assessment information indicates that pupils in most year groups typically make strong progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Work seen in books supported this interpretation.
- The percentage of pupils meeting the required standard for the phonics screening check is improving and outcomes are now in line with the national average. For pupils currently in Year 1, progress is carefully checked and the teaching of phonics is good. Well-planned and specific processes of intervention for any pupils falling behind are in place. Leaders monitor to ensure that this upward trajectory is set to continue in 2018.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils acquire a love of reading from an early age. They talk with enthusiasm about the different types of books they enjoy and their

favourite authors. Pupils read to the inspector with confidence and flair. They tackle unknown words well and have a good grasp of comprehension. Their joy of reading is reflected in the published data, which shows that pupils achieve well and make good progress. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading is above the national average.

- While the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics is typically good, not enough pupils are achieving greater depth, especially among the most able. This is because teachers do not consistently provide activities that sufficiently challenge pupils and make them think deeply. For example, in mathematics, work given to pupils is sometimes too easy. Consequently, they do not always acquire the skills or confidence to tackle more complex number problems or reasoning. Published data shows that the proportions of pupils working at greater depth in writing and mathematics, while improving, remain below national expectations.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is small. Careful tracking of these pupils and the effective use of funding ensure that they receive high-quality support. This allows them to make similar progress to their peers, in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of the early years provision is good. The leader is passionate, knowledgeable and highly skilled in early years education. She uses this knowledge to provide children with exciting and stimulating learning opportunities. This encourages children to explore, and to develop skills and understanding in a wide range of areas. For example, children were engrossed in exploring a wide range of shoes. They were able to put the shoes in size order successfully, identify the materials used to make them and articulate their purpose. They worked well together to make a shop for their shoes and were clearly enjoying their learning.
- The quality of teaching in the early years provision is good. Children are actively encouraged to follow their interests and initiate their own learning. This helps them to practise their skills and find things out for themselves. This was exemplified when a child found a dead blackbird: children were keen to arrange a funeral, which included making the coffin, organising flowers, writing a service incorporating prayers and music, and finding a suitable place for the burial.
- Transition arrangements into school are effective. Home visits prior to children starting provide the opportunity for staff to build strong relationships with the children and their parents. As a result, children quickly settle, are happy, sociable and enjoy coming to school.
- Behaviour in the early years provision is exemplary. This is because staff have extremely high expectations, are excellent role models for the children and quickly establish routines which are consistently applied. Consequently, children rapidly learn what is expected of them.
- The skills of children as they arrive in the Reception class vary year on year. Consequently, the number of children achieving a good level of development varies. In 2016, 72% achieved a good level of development, which was in line with the national

average. The early years leader uses progress information carefully to formulate detailed action plans to ensure that children make the best possible progress given their starting points. Specifically, she has identified that children who have skills below those expected need to have activities which will help them rapidly catch up with their peers.

- Typically, current children have arrived as confident and curious learners with knowledge and skills above those typical for their age, especially in their knowledge of number, writing and in their phonics skills. The teacher has wasted no time in ensuring that the provision meets their needs, so that these children can make the very best possible progress.
- The experience children receive in the early years provision ensures that they are well prepared as they enter Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	123823
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10033155

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Clayphan
Executive Headteacher	Carolyn Tommey
Telephone number	01373 830523
Website	www.rode.somerset.gov.uk
Email address	rodeandnortoninfo@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 December 2008

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Rode Methodist First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school federated with Norton St Philip Church of England First School in March 2016 to secure the long-term future of the schools.
- The current school leadership team was established in September 2017.
- Pupils are taught predominantly in single age classes. Reception children and Year 1 pupils are taught at Norton St Philip. Years 2, 3 and 4 are taught at Rode Methodist VC First School. Pupils travel by minibus to the appropriate school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below the

national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in every class. All observations were undertaken with the executive headteacher. The quality of pupils' work was scrutinised alongside leaders.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors. A telephone conversation was held with the school's education partner.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils to listen to their views about the school and to hear them read. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's development plan, and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- The inspector considered the 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 41 text messages were taken into account. The inspector spoke to parents informally at the end of the day.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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