

Rucstall Primary School

Holbein Close, Black Dam, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 3EX

Inspection dates

3–4 October 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has been through a turbulent time with many changes to leadership and staff. The headteacher has united the school community in a drive to improve outcomes for pupils. As a result, in the last year there have been rapid improvements, especially in key stage 2.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They are polite, cheerful and friendly to staff and their classmates alike. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who work hard and take pride in their achievements.
- Teachers know pupils well because they use a range of information to reach accurate assessments of what pupils know. They use this information to plan lessons that develop pupils' skills and deepen their understanding.
- Pupils in all year groups are making good progress. Where levels of attainment and rates of progress have not been high enough, leaders' decisive actions to improve teaching have resulted in better outcomes, especially in key stage 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Staff understand the needs of young children well and provide a stimulating, well-resourced environment to foster an enjoyment of learning.
- Learning support assistants are skilled and well trained. They offer strong support to teachers both in class and when teaching groups of pupils.
- Welfare and safeguarding arrangements are thorough, detailed and effective. Senior leaders spare no effort to ensure that all pupils are kept safe.
- At times, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing by applying their skills in extended, independent pieces of work.
- Governors are improving their effectiveness and know the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, they do not have a strong understanding of published information about pupils' progress. This restricts their ability to challenge leaders robustly.
- Development plans do not focus clearly on the impact that planned actions have on rates of pupils' progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and governance so that leaders can be held more stringently to account by ensuring that:
 - improvement plans focus clearly on the impact that actions will have on speeding up the rates of progress of different groups of pupils
 - governors acquire a thorough understanding of published information about pupils' outcomes so that they can challenge leaders more robustly.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make better progress in writing, especially in key stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - pupils have regular opportunities to apply their skills and write at length
 - teachers use starting points that will really interest boys and spark their enthusiasm for writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has shown great determination in leading the school through a time of significant turbulence, during which pupils' performance dipped. Together with the deputy headteacher, she has focused unwaveringly on raising outcomes by improving the quality of teaching. In 2017, attainment rose sharply at the end of key stage 2 because the quality of teaching has improved.
- Leaders place the school's values, such as perseverance and cooperation, at the heart of the school's work. This fosters a culture of high expectations, and morale among staff is high. Pupils and staff alike subscribe to these values and embrace them wholeheartedly. Pupils explain how they apply them to their learning, especially when they find things challenging.
- Senior leaders know the school well and their self-evaluation is accurate. They draw on a range of sources of evidence to judge the effectiveness of the school, including published information about the school's performance. Leaders and governors also take the advice of experts from outside the school in their drive to improve the school further.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective. Some have only been in post for a short time. They are supported well and are focused on the right areas to drive improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Performance management of both teachers and support staff has contributed to the improvements in the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Challenging targets provide a strong incentive for teachers to strive for the best for their pupils.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well. These pupils make good progress from their starting points because leaders understand pupils' barriers to learning and use funds thoughtfully to overcome them.
- The local authority knows the school well and was quick to offer support when the school declined. The support has been effective, enabling senior leaders to make necessary improvements.
- The curriculum is focused clearly on providing pupils with the key skills of English and mathematics. Teachers plan interesting topics that often cover a range of subjects and bring learning to life for pupils. The curriculum is enriched by many visits to interesting places and clubs outside of school hours. These visits include Butser Ancient Farm, the New Forest and Portsmouth Naval Dockyard.
- Teachers draw on pupils' interests when planning the curriculum and encourage them to become active learners. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and appreciate the range of activities on offer for them. For example, one pupil talked about how he had used 'green screen' technology when making a video at home. The teacher noted this, arranged for a green screen in school and built an exciting learning topic that captured all pupils' interest.
- Teachers give pupils a good understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy. These values are reinforced with such events as a 'Parliament week' in

school. Staff also help pupils to understand that all people are equal, regardless of their racial background, gender, gender identity, sexuality, special educational needs or culture.

- The curriculum provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about a range of religions and visit places of worship such as the local church and Hindu temple. Every opportunity is taken to learn about different cultures by using the experiences of staff and pupils who come from different backgrounds. Pupils have regular opportunities to enjoy and take part in music and theatre performances.
- Improvement plans do not focus sharply enough on accelerating rates of progress for groups of pupils. Most plans lack clear measurable targets and milestones by which leaders can be held to account.

Governance of the school

- Governance in the school is improving. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities and work hard to carry them out. They have sought expert advice on how to sharpen their effectiveness and have received training to support this drive for improvement.
- Safeguarding pupils is central to the governors' work. Governors ensure that all safeguarding procedures are checked regularly, including the checks that staff make on people who apply to work in the school.
- Governors have a broadly accurate view of the school and draw on a range of evidence to check on what they have been told by the headteacher.
- Governors ask the right questions to monitor key aspects of the school's work. However, they are hampered in their ability to offer stringent challenge to the school because they do not have a thorough understanding of published information about the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that the well-being of pupils is at the heart of this school's work. All staff receive regular training so that they are alert to any signs that indicate that a pupil is at risk.
- Policies and protocols to keep pupils safe are thorough, well understood and fit for purpose. Staff make all the right checks to ensure that only suitable people are allowed to work in the school.
- An online system is in place for recording even minor concerns about pupils. Staff understand this system and use it whenever they have a worry about a pupil. The headteacher and deputy headteacher receive alerts whenever a concern is registered. This ensures that senior leaders have immediate up-to-date knowledge about any child regarded as being at risk.
- Pupils are safe in school. Parents, pupils and staff all agree that this is true.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have acted resolutely to improve the quality of teaching. They have tackled areas of weakness successfully and raised levels of expectation so that teaching is good. As a result, pupils are making rapid progress, especially in key stage 2.
- Staff assess pupils' learning accurately and have a clear grasp of any gaps in their understanding. Detailed tracking systems support teachers in planning carefully to meet pupils' known needs. As soon as any pupils start to slip behind, staff intervene promptly to offer the right support so that they catch up quickly. Pupils at all ability levels receive this help, ensuring that none get left behind. One parent said, '[Teachers] strive to get the best out of the children no matter what level they are at.'
- The teaching of mathematics is a strength of the school. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Work in books shows clearly that pupils are expected to think carefully about their learning, explain their thinking and use well-developed reasoning skills. Pupils show determination and develop a depth of understanding in mathematics that provides them with a secure foundation to make good progress.
- Teachers promote reading enthusiastically by providing a wide range of books and encouraging pupils to read regularly. The teaching of reading is effective and lessons are interesting and engaging. Pupils enjoy books and talk knowledgeably about ones they have read and about authors that they particularly like. Pupils' written work about their reading is of a very high standard.
- Pupils quickly learn phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) because the teaching of this aspect is good. It provides them with the strong foundation needed to become successful readers.
- The teaching of writing is mostly effective. When teachers give pupils opportunities to write at length they rise to the challenge well and produce interesting work in a range of styles. Pupils take care in their writing and work hard to present their work neatly and accurately. Even young pupils take responsibility for self-correcting. Leaders rightly identify that boys do not have the same enthusiasm for writing seen in girls.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to challenge individuals appropriately and recognise misconceptions. Teachers and learning support assistants ask searching questions that require pupils to think carefully and give convincing reasons for answers. This questioning fosters independence in pupils and helps them to recall previous learning.
- Classrooms are bright and stimulating. Pupils use the many helpful displays to remind them of such things as important spellings and methods in mathematics. Some displays contain notes from pupils' reflections on memorable achievements and what qualities enabled them to succeed. Pupils of all abilities grow in maturity and confidence and talk perceptively about their learning.
- Learning support assistants play an important role in helping pupils to be successful learners. They know the pupils well and help them by asking good questions, checking on pupils' understanding, and offering further challenge. Just occasionally teaching assistants offer pupils too much support, which slows pupils' learning.

- Feedback in pupils' books is reflective of the high levels of independence and levels of expectation of the pupils. Pupils regularly act on teachers' advice and this helps them to overcome any misunderstandings and take their learning one step further.
- Homework is used to help pupils practise skills, and learn such things as spelling and times tables. Teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to work on projects at home linked to topics studied in school. While most parents appreciate the homework that is provided, some feel that there is rather too much.
- In some classes, pupils do not get enough opportunities for extended, independent writing so that they can apply the skills that they have learned. Teachers sometimes spend too much time in more mundane learning activities that do not enable pupils to develop quickly as writers. This limits pupils' progress in writing. When pupils have regular opportunities to write at length, there is evidence of rapid progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident, motivated learners. The school's values, such as perseverance and cooperation play a vital role in helping pupils to become reflective and extremely articulate. Pupils think carefully about their learning and talk thoughtfully about the improvements that they have made. Discussion, support and challenge between classmates are a regular part of many lessons. One pupil in Year 6 explained how she has developed resilience by appreciating that effort brings achievement. Inspectors found this level of understanding in many pupils, especially in key stage 2.
- Leaders foster a strong sense of community where staff and pupils take good care of each other. Pupils enjoy being in school and get on tremendously well together, which leads to a happy school where respect and acceptance prevail. One parent said, 'all [of my] children have not only massively improved intellectually but emotionally'.
- Pupils understand clearly what bullying means, but say that it is so rare that they struggle to recall any instances of it. Pupils have complete confidence in staff at the school and know that they will quickly sort out any problems or worries.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are taught to stay safe. Visits from people such as paramedics and the fire service help pupils to know how to stay safe both in and out of school.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of e-safety, especially as they move up the school. Inspectors spoke to pupils, who explained that there are some mobile phone applications and computer programs that are dangerous for them to use while they are still young. Pupils know how to stay safe online and protect themselves from unnecessary risk.
- Senior leaders work tirelessly to ensure that welfare arrangements are thorough and effective. Leaders always engage the help of external agencies when pupils are judged to be at risk of harm. When the right level of support is not forthcoming, leaders show great tenacity in pleading the case of vulnerable pupils successfully.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour towards adults and peers alike is impeccable. They are polite to staff, visitors and each other. Behaviour is as strong during free times, such as playtime, as it is when pupils are in class. Pupils are extremely friendly and eager to talk about their school.
- Pupils hold themselves accountable for their own actions. One pupil told an inspector, 'We don't have school rules because we don't need them. It's about taking responsibility for our own behaviour.' Parents and staff agree wholeheartedly that pupils behave well, and are safe and happy in school.
- Pupils collaborate very well and offer each other help and support. They regularly ask each other questions and offer each other challenges. This strategy is used particularly well to support pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- One parent who visited the school commented, 'All the pupils behaved in such a manner that I was astounded that so many children could behave without reprimand or negative behaviours.'
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They come prepared to learn and work hard. They are respectful, enthusiastic and self-motivated. The high standards of presentation in their books are a clear reflection of the pride that they take in their work.
- A small number pupils have well-understood behaviour needs. Leaders ensure that highly effective support is in place to help them behave well. As a result, these pupils are included in lessons and learn alongside their classmates.
- The great majority of pupils attend school regularly and levels of attendance are improving overall. However, a few disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have low attendance. Leaders know these families well and have been tenacious in their drive to improve these pupils' attendance at school. Leaders have acted relentlessly, including issuing fines and enlisting the support of external agencies to reduce absence figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' work across the school shows that they are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In all year groups, disadvantaged pupils' attainment is at least as good as that of other pupils in school.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standards in the phonics screening check was above that seen nationally last year. By the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard is in line with national figures. Standards of reading across the school are good and pupils read with enthusiasm and clarity.
- Pupils make good progress in key stage 1. In 2016, pupils achieved standards above those seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth was above national figures, especially in writing and

mathematics.

- Leaders' actions to improve teaching and secure rapid progress in key stage 2 have had a positive effect. Levels of attainment in reading and mathematics improved sharply in 2017 so that, as with writing, they are in line with national figures.
- This academic year the great majority of pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.
- Despite a rising trend of attainment at the end of key stage 2, progress over time has been too slow in mathematics, especially for pupils of average ability. Rates of progress in mathematics have been well below those seen nationally for several years. Inspectors found convincing evidence that although pupils in Year 6 had not made enough progress over the four years of key stage 2, last academic year they made good progress in mathematics.
- Leaders recognise that some pupils in Year 6 are not prepared well enough for the demands of the national curriculum tests, especially in reading. Plans are in place to enable pupils to tackle these tests better in the future.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the school with skills typical for their age and stage of development. They make good progress and the proportions of children who reach a good level of development are above those seen nationally. By the end of their time in the early years, pupils are ready to move to Year 1.
- The environment is bright and stimulating, with mathematics and language activities set up right from the start of the day. The classroom and the outdoor area provide well for all areas of learning.
- Children settle into school quickly because there are effective transition arrangements in place. Behaviour is good because staff ensure that routines are securely in place and understood by all children. Children all respond positively to the high standards expected of them. They quickly learn to take turns, listen carefully and be sociable.
- Teachers plan activities that interest children and engage their curiosity. Children concentrate well and are absorbed in their learning throughout lessons and during independent learning times. They sustain their interest well. Staff intervene intelligently and encourage children to talk about activities. They also give children ideas about how to take their learning further.
- Learning support assistants are trained well and receive strong support from the early years leader to ensure that they understand how young children learn and how to help them learn through play.
- The recently appointed leader of the early years has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for further development of this stage. She understands how well children are achieving from their baseline because assessments use a range of evidence, including teachers' observations. Staff use this information to set targets for children and to fill any gaps in children's learning.
- Parents are involved in their children's learning and contribute to their record of achievements with things they have done at home. Parents say that they feel

involved in their children's life in school.

- Safeguarding is effective. Children are safe. All staff have had the right training to look after children well, including first-aid training.
- Although children make good progress, not enough make the rapid progress needed to exceed early learning goals.

School details

Unique reference number	116040
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10024792

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	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Mitchener
Headteacher	Helen Morris
Telephone number	01256 466524
Website	www.rucstall.hants.sch.uk
Email address	adminoffice@rucstall.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet the requirements on the publication of information on its website. Progress measures for pupils at the end of key stage 2 are not published.
- Rucstall Primary School is an average-sized primary school. There are eight classes. One class has pupils from two different year groups.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that seen in other schools across the country.
- Most pupils are White British. Proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups are below the national average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below that seen nationally.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics

by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Most of these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a range of English and mathematics books with senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, the vice-chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- The lead inspector met with a local authority school improvement officer.
- Inspectors met with several senior and middle leaders including those responsible for mathematics, English, the early years and special educational needs provision.
- Inspectors took account of the 61 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and the written comments that were submitted. Responses from 22 staff and 20 pupil questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's improvement plans and those recording the work of the governors. They examined information on pupils' current progress and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to a group of them about school life.
- This inspection started as a section 8 short inspection, but converted to a full section 5 when the lead inspector judged that more evidence was required to confirm that the school remained good.

Inspection team

Bruce Waelend, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joyce Lydford	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Cale	Ofsted Inspector

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