

Inspection of Russells Hall Primary School

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

Inspection dates: 22–23 October 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They say that adults care about them and that they feel very safe at school. Pupils enjoy learning and are interested in the new topics they are studying. Teachers encourage them to work hard and not give up.

In the last couple of years, pupils have not been doing as well as they might. However, leaders are doing the right things to improve the school. They are working with all staff to improve the quality of education. Pupils are now doing better in reading and writing. Leaders and staff want the best for the pupils.

Pupils behave well because they know what is expected. They move around school in a calm and orderly manner. They show respect by holding doors open for each other and for visitors to the school. Pupils are very polite and well mannered.

Pupils enjoy each other's company. For example, pupils of all ages sit and chat happily together during 'magic breakfast' time. Pupils understand bullying. They are not worried about being bullied. Anti-bullying ambassadors work with adults to help pupils when they fall out.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Learning is carefully planned, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Other subjects are mainly taught through topics introduced this year. These interest pupils and help them develop knowledge and skills over time. Leaders make sure there is a balance of different subjects. Planning shows that the subject content for each topic is being developed. It is stronger in some subjects such as history, geography, science and music than in others.

New approaches to the teaching of reading are having a positive impact. Leaders make sure reading is a priority and on every class timetable. Leaders provide training for staff so that they know how to teach reading well. Children learn their sounds quickly in the Reception classes. Every day skilled adults help pupils who struggle. Pupils work hard in their 'hooked on books' sessions. They give detailed answers about the books they are reading. Although there is no space for a school library, leaders make sure that there are books in every part of the school.

The teaching of music is a particular strength in the school. It is well taught by a specialist teacher. Pupils make strong progress. They learn to read music, play an instrument and perform confidently. A range of live performances by skilled musicians raises aspirations further.

Highly skilled staff support pupils with complex needs in the nurture class. The curriculum is adapted well to meet their needs. Pupils grow in confidence and learn to work with others. Leaders work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in school life.

Children are safe and happy in early years. Staff focus on developing key skills in speaking and listening, reading, writing and number. Children love to explore and they settle quickly to their learning. This is because the curriculum is carefully planned to meet their needs. Children cooperate with each other and take turns. Parents and carers are strongly encouraged to support their child at home. Workshops provide ideas of how they can help, especially with reading.

The school values of kindness, honesty and respect are seen in the positive relationships between everyone in the school. Everyone works hard to focus on their similarities rather than their differences. Links with a school in Kenya help pupils understand life and culture in another country. First-hand experiences such as dissecting a heart or visiting a museum bring learning to life. Pupils talk enthusiastically about what they have learned.

Leaders try hard to improve attendance. They work closely with families of pupils who do not attend often enough. They provide rewards for good attendance as well as issuing penalty fines. However, attendance remains low.

Most parents are positive about the school and say that their child is happy and well cared for. However, some parents think that leaders do not listen carefully enough to their concerns.

Leaders and governors are committed to the school. They halted the decline in standards. They work hard with all staff to make things even better. Leaders accept that they did not check the quality of education carefully enough in the past. However, senior leaders know where the weaknesses are. They are taking the right action to further improve the school.

Governors have a broad range of knowledge and skills. They understand their role and provide good support for leaders. Sometimes, they are not given sufficiently detailed information to enable them to fully hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The members of the safeguarding team work well together to keep children safe in school. They take their responsibilities seriously. They make sure that staff are well trained and confident to report concerns. Weekly memos keep everyone up to date with the latest guidance. Leaders act quickly when they are worried about a pupil. They make sure that pupils and their families get good support.

Pupils learn about road safety and how to stay safe when they use the internet. Leaders help pupils understand the risks in the local area.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are now taking the right actions to improve the school, but they were slow to respond to the dip in school effectiveness. This is because monitoring and evaluation processes were not deeply embedded. Leaders should quickly establish a more robust cycle of school improvement to drive the necessary raising of standards. They should use this information to ensure that leaders at all levels are fully held to account.
- Governors meet regularly and have a good awareness of the main areas of strength and the aspects that need improving. However, they do not get sufficiently detailed information about some aspects of the school's performance. Leaders should ensure that governors are well informed about data and the school's performance. Governors should ensure that, through a robust cycle of school improvement, they hold senior leaders to account more rigorously.
- The curriculum is carefully planned and engages pupils. Some subjects are more developed than others and ensure that learning builds on what pupils can already do. Leaders should continue to develop the curriculum so that all foundation subjects are coherently planned and sequenced.
- Absence rates are high. Some pupils are regularly absent from school. Leaders should continue to work with families to help them to get their children to school more often. Improved rates of attendance will enable pupils to make better progress.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 103813 |
| Local authority | Dudley |
| Inspection number | 10088613 |
| 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 | 418 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Dawn Elsom |
| Headteacher | Jennifer Brown |
| Website | www.russellshall.org.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 24–25 September 2013 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher was acting headteacher at the last inspection. She was appointed to the substantive post in April 2014.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- The inspectors visited lessons in all year groups. Most lesson visits were with a senior leader.
- The inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and experiences in school. They looked at pupils' work in a range of different subjects to see how well the curriculum was applied. Inspectors focused on reading, writing, mathematics, geography and music.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders for English, mathematics, geography and music. An inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to discuss provision for pupils with special

educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The lead inspector held discussions with four governors, including the chair and vice-chair of governors. She also had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors met with groups of teachers to discuss how they are supported to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including school policies, curriculum documents, safeguarding information (including the checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment), minutes of governors' meetings, and published information about pupils' performance. The school's website was also scrutinised.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the end of the first day of inspection and again at the start of the second day. The lead inspector considered the 20 responses to Parent View and the eight free-text responses.

Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Appleby

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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