

Inspection of a good school: Rush Common School

Hendred Way, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 2AW

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021

Outcome

Rush Common School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to Rush Common School. Within this nurturing environment, they are able to 'dream, aspire and succeed'. Happiness is all around. Adults show exceptional care to children. It is as if pupils have an extended family at school. Pupils feel safe knowing that staff will do all they can to protect them.

Staff are ambitious for pupils to do well. Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum that ignites their knowledge and talents. Opportunities to develop in the arts and competitive sports are plentiful. Pupils and staff play together in the school orchestra. In addition, older pupils learn Mandarin Chinese, and they are offered the chance to take an international Chinese language exam.

Pupils behave very well. Most of them diligently follow the school rules of 'be safe, be kind and be respectful'. Pupils look out for each other. One child said, 'There is not one bully in this school.' They feel confident in the school's anti-bullying pupil ambassadors, and feel confident that any adult would help them if needed.

Nearly all parents surveyed would recommend the school. One parent, reflecting the views of many others, said that their children are becoming well-rounded individuals who love learning. The parent also said, 'I couldn't ask for more.'

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

The school's curriculum challenges pupils' thinking and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Subject leaders have taken the reins to ensure that staff are clear about what they must teach, and when. Knowledge is logically sequenced in all subjects from Reception to Year 6. Some content is being taught for the first time this year, but the revamped curriculum is helping pupils to make strong connections with what they have previously learned. Many older pupils speak eloquently on a range of topics. Children in early years get off to a flying start.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They explain ideas in a way that pupils can understand. Vocabulary is an important feature of lessons. Pupils learn ambitious words and they practise these regularly. Teachers are skilled in facilitating class discussions which get pupils to think deeply about new concepts. Despite this, staff, at times, do not expect enough of pupils in their work. This is because some of the activities chosen are not well thought out to help pupils acquire detailed knowledge. Pupils' opportunities to write at length are limited in the wider curriculum subjects, and staff do not always ensure that pupils' handwriting is the best it can be.

Leaders have worked hard to instil a reading culture that motivates pupils. The books that older pupils read for pleasure are thought-provoking and widen their horizons. In the library, there are books that represent different cultures and themes.

Leaders are currently using their own scheme to teach pupils to read. Children are taught to read from the start of Reception. Any child who is not where they should be in reading is provided with extra practice. However, some of the books that pupils read are not yet closely matched to the sounds they know. Leaders are aware, and are taking action to sort this out and move to a full systematic phonics programme.

Pupils are eager to do their best in lessons. They are well motivated to learn. Sometimes there are a small number of pupils who can become distracted and disturb others. When this happens, staff do not always spot it quickly enough. Consequently, some pupils miss important points in some lessons.

Leaders wholly adopt an inclusive culture where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well catered for. Staff are adept at picking up early signs that a child may have additional needs. Leaders work effectively with other professionals to ensure that the right provision for pupils with SEND is put in place without delay.

The trust and school leaders look after staff very well. They check in on how staff are feeling, and consider workload. Leaders are committed to training and developing the staff's teaching skills. Many of those who work in the school spoke of a wonderful culture where they are valued and respected.

The chief executive of the trust robustly holds leaders to account for pupils' education. Trustees delegate core duties to the local governing board. Governors fulfil these duties well, and they ensure that they check how well pupils are learning the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's designated safeguarding team is highly skilled. The team members know exactly what to do to keep children safe. The training and information they deliver to staff are exemplary. Adults are clear that if they have a concern, no matter how small, they go straight to the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders' decisions and actions are swift. They ensure that records are accurate, with a clear chronology. They are relentless in

getting the right help for children and families. The trust makes sure that safeguarding is at the heart of all it does. It rigorously reviews procedures and practice.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes teachers plan activities that do not expect enough from pupils, including those with SEND. This limits pupils' development of detailed knowledge across the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that staff are well trained to implement the curriculum effectively and set the highest of expectations for all pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2017.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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

Unique reference number	137920
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10207101
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	396
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jonathan Hopkins
Headteacher	Kristen Fawcett
Website	www.rushcommonschoo.org/
Date of previous inspection	11 and 12 January 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Rush Common School is part of Abingdon Learning Trust.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2018 as deputy headteacher. He became acting headteacher in April 2019, and then substantive headteacher from September 2020.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- He met with senior leaders, the chief executive, the chair of the local academy board and a trustee.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. This involved discussions with leaders about these subjects and the curriculum plans, visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions

with pupils, teachers and teaching assistants from the lessons visited about the subjects.

- Pupils were observed reading to a familiar adult by the inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke with staff and pupils. He met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine records and actions. This included sampling case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils who are at risk of harm. He reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of staff.
- The inspector met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, including 33 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey, were considered.
- The 82 written responses to Ofsted's Parent View were taken into account.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation form, policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records, published information about pupils' performance, and the school's website.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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