

# Inspection of a good school: The Russell School

Brushwood Drive, Chorleywood, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 5RR

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Inspection dates:

29 and 30 November 2022

## Outcome

The Russell School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils here are friendly, articulate and happy. They are taught and encouraged to be open-minded. As a result, pupils are receptive to new ideas and different points of view. Pupils are safe because adults in the school look after them well.

Pupils benefit from working with adults who model cheerfulness, good manners and high expectations. This leads to positive pupil behaviour in classrooms and around the school. Pupils understand what bullying is and know exactly what they should do in the unlikely event of it occurring. Typically, pupils are kind to each other and say that staff would act immediately if there were any problems. Children and pupils of all ages play together and support each other at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Pupils experience a high-quality and exceptionally well-planned curriculum. This, and teaching from experienced adults, helps pupils to learn well. A range of clubs, including sports and music, enhance pupils' classroom experiences. The bands, choirs and orchestra are well attended by boys and girls from across the school. The school site includes an outdoor classroom and a swimming pool. These also add to pupils' experiences and their enjoyment of learning.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders and teachers have worked hard to improve the quality of education for pupils. Children and pupils achieve very well across the curriculum. Staff have a consistent and relentless focus on core knowledge such as spelling, punctuation and grammar. Reasoning skills are well developed, both spoken and written. The youngest children in Nursery enjoy identifying and sorting toys into groups of two, three, four and five. Older pupils enthusiastically advance from calculating by using drawings and physical objects, to solving and explaining more complex abstract mathematical problems.

Detailed, bespoke curriculum plans are in place for every subject. These plans reflect the aims and subjects of the national curriculum and are ambitious. They set out exactly what pupils are expected to know by the end of each school year, including the topics and knowledge to be covered, and the way in which pupils are expected to connect their growing knowledge.

Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They deliver lessons with fluency and confidence. Teachers regularly check that pupils are understanding new vocabulary and concepts. Plenty of opportunities are given to apply learning in a practical way. For example, whole-class ukulele lessons from visiting music teachers complement the regular music curriculum very well because both have a consistent focus on developing pupils' music knowledge. Pupils remember knowledge and build on it in subsequent learning. For example, Year 5 pupils can explain how fold mountains are formed by referring to the work they did on volcanoes in Year 4. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are assessed accurately and supported effectively in class. This enables them to access the same learning as their peers. As a result, all pupils achieve very well.

Children learn to read as soon as they join the Nursery. The school adopted a new scheme for teaching phonics in September 2022. This is already being used consistently well by all staff. Pupils who struggle with reading are identified quickly and given additional support. Reading diaries are well used to maintain communication with parents and ensure that meaningful reading happens outside school. Older pupils develop into enthusiastic and fluent readers. Year 5 pupils are rightly proud of the outdoor reading garden that they manage for the benefit of the whole school.

Work to promote pupils' wider development is a distinctive feature of this school. Staff and governors ensure that diversity and sustainability are at the heart of school life. Pupils have a remarkably mature understanding of issues around diversity and respect. This understanding includes both within and outside their own school and local communities. Pupils are inquisitive learners and listen carefully to their teachers. Low-level disruption in lessons is almost unheard of. This is due, in part, to the way in which adults treat pupils with respect.

The local authority and parents hold the school in extremely high regard. Staff are supportive of leaders' and governors' drive to improve their school. They appreciate the time given to prepare lessons and to lead and monitor their subject areas. Teachers are given time to ensure they can plan together and, on occasion, teach together to ensure that pupils consistently experience a high-quality education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have regular safeguarding training. They are knowledgeable about what to do if they have or if they receive safeguarding concerns. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Safeguarding information is displayed prominently around the

school and is accessible to children and pupils of every age.

Safeguarding case files are detailed and well ordered. Records show strong working partnerships with outside agencies, including the police, to ensure that pupils at risk are helped. Records of staff's personnel checks are thorough and kept efficiently. Governors have firm oversight of all safeguarding and health and safety matters.

## 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117098
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241649
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	227
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Paul Treadwell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire Pitt
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.russell.herts.sch.uk">www.russell.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 and 28 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there has been a change of deputy headteacher. A new chair was appointed to the governing body in 2019.
- The school does not use 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 leaders and has taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspector met regularly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, including in their roles as designated safeguarding leads. The inspector also discussed safeguarding with members of staff, looked at recruitment checks and records and sampled other safeguarding documentation.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. Each deep dive included meeting with subject leaders, visiting lessons, speaking with teachers and pupils and looking at pupils' work.

- The inspector also sampled plans and pupils' work from other areas of the curriculum.
- The inspector met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the chair of the governing body and three other governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their experience of school and their learning, and he observed their behaviour in classrooms and on the playground.

### **Inspection team**

Mark Phillips, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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