

Inspection of Rusthall St Paul's CofE VA Primary School

High Street, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 8RZ

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

New leaders have worked hard to increase expectations at this school. Pupils are encouraged to believe in themselves so that they can achieve well. They come to school ready to learn and do their best. Children in the early years settle and learn the routines of school quickly when they arrive. Pupils in all phases enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff who know them well.

Pupils are kind to others and know that it is important to respect different viewpoints. They look out for each other and cooperate well together. For example, older pupils look forward to helping their younger peers as part of the 'buddy system'. Pupils learn to be inclusive and respect culture and diversity through the school's personal development programme. For example, they were keen to tell the inspector how they welcomed pupils to the school from Ukraine.

Pupils enjoy taking part in sports clubs that are on offer. Leaders ensure that pupils who would benefit the most attend. Leaders are working to give pupils more opportunities to develop their talents and interests further in the future. Trips are well chosen to enrich the curriculum and develop a broader understanding of the local environment, for example a Year 5 visit to see sandstone formations in the area to develop their knowledge of rocks in geography.

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

New leaders at the school are making rapid and significant improvements to the school's curriculum. However, this is still a work in progress, especially in the foundation subjects. In subjects such as science, mathematics and early reading, leaders have ensured that a well-sequenced curriculum is in place. The knowledge that pupils must learn is clearly identified so that they build securely on their learning. Although new leaders are making rapid improvements, in subjects such as history and art, pupils do not yet follow a well-sequenced curriculum. Leaders have not yet precisely identified the important information that pupils must know.

Leaders have ensured that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly identified and supported well so that they access the full curriculum. They achieve mostly in line with their peers.

In subjects where the curriculum is more developed and embedded well, pupils learn knowledge securely. They apply previous learning to help them understand new tasks. For example, in mathematics, Year 6 pupils use their prior knowledge of coordinates and number lines to help them to plot coordinates in four quadrants, including using negative numbers.

In most subjects, teachers plan opportunities for pupils to revisit their learning. They use questioning effectively to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Most teachers change their plans to address these, although this has not always happened swiftly enough in the past. Therefore, pupils' knowledge in all subjects is not consistently

secure. In the early years, leaders know that there are more significant gaps in children's learning, and leaders are making rapid progress to close these.

Children in Reception learn to read right from the start. Staff have received in-depth training to deliver the new phonics programme well. However, sometimes staff move on too quickly before pupils have fully embedded their phonic knowledge. A number of pupils have fallen behind in their phonics learning. However, they are now receiving the support that they need to help them to catch up. Older pupils are fluent readers who enjoy reading and are ready to access the reading curriculum at secondary school.

New leaders have ensured that children in the early years are now benefiting from a well-resourced outside space. The newly implemented curriculum is working well to support children in improving their skills and knowledge in each of the areas of development. For example, children develop their problem-solving and motor and communication skills by building a ship together.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and talk with interest and confidence about their work. They report that sometimes they are disturbed by others who talk in lessons. However, all agree that teachers address this quickly when it happens. Although many pupils attend school often, leaders know that there are a small number who do not attend as much as they should. New leaders have taken action to address this swiftly but there is still more work to do here.

Pupils learn about issues such as consent and e-safety in an age-appropriate way through the well-planned personal, social and health education curriculum. During 'healthy living week' pupils learn how to look after themselves through healthy eating and exercise. Leaders have focused on ensuring that pupils know how to care for their mental health. For example, through worry boxes, mood meters and talking.

Those responsible for governance and acting senior leaders are committed to raising aspirations and outcomes at this school. They have a shared vision and clear understanding of what needs to be done to make the improvements that are needed. They have already made a significantly positive impact in a short period of time. Staff feel valued by leaders who take their views into account and act to reduce workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive high-quality training so that they can quickly identify pupils who might be at risk. Leaders maintain clear records so that they can carefully monitor pupils who they are concerned about. Leaders seek support from outside agencies so that pupils and their families get the help that they might need quickly. Appropriate safety checks are carried out on adults who are new to working at the school.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and trust that adults will support them when they are worried. They have a secure understanding of online safety. They know that they should say “no” if something makes them feel uncomfortable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not yet fully planned in all subjects. In many foundation subjects, the precise knowledge that pupils must learn, and the order in which it should be taught, has not yet been explicitly identified. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they should in all subjects. Leaders who are new to the school should continue to develop the curriculum and provide training for staff so that all teachers know what they must teach, and when so that pupils build securely on their previous learning.
- Subject leaders have not yet had sufficient training or time to develop and monitor the areas of the curriculum that they are responsible for. This means that the quality of curriculum delivery is inconsistent, particularly in the foundation subjects. New leaders need to continue with the plans that they already have in place to provide professional development for subject leaders so that they can share expertise and monitor practice in their subjects, with a focus on sharply improving pupil outcomes.
- Until very recently, children in the early years have learned the curriculum alongside Year 1. This means that they have not engaged in learning which is specifically tailored to their needs. Leaders know that there are some gaps in children’s knowledge as a result. New leaders need to continue to embed and monitor the newly implemented curriculum so that children securely develop knowledge and skills in line with the expectations of the early years foundation stage.

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

Unique reference number	135164
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256287
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Ruth Hinckley
Headteacher	John Tutt (Acting Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.rusthall-cep.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a voluntary aided, Church of England school, in the diocese of Rochester. The previous section 48 inspection took place on 17 October 2017.
- The school has experienced a reduction in the number of pupils joining the school in recent years.
- The acting executive headteacher and head of school are leading the school temporarily.
- The school is currently governed by an interim executive board.
- There is an on-site breakfast and afterschool club which is run by the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19

pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. This included visiting lessons, meeting with subject leaders and talking with staff and pupils. Inspectors also met with the subject leaders of art, design technology, physical education and music to review curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement. They met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the local authority school improvement partner, a representative from the diocese and members of the interim executive board, including the chair.
- The arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and at other times of the day.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and a review of Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Zoë Harris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Giles Osborne

Ofsted Inspector

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