

# Russell Street School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110252
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	310239
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Vivienne McTiffen

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	213
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ross Dilnot
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sandra Lewis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Russell Street Stony Stratford MK11 1BT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 563148
<b>Fax number</b>	01908 267378

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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 December 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Russell Street School is smaller than average. Most pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is lower than average, as is the proportion of those for whom English is not the first language, although these numbers are increasing. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. These pupils include those who have emotional and behaviour difficulties. The early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of the Nursery and two Reception classes. There is a pre-school and council-run day nursery on the school's site. The school has the Activemark award and achieved Healthy School status in 2005. There is a new headteacher, who has been in post since September 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school rightly recognises that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory, but the newly appointed headteacher and governing body are keen to improve. There are already a number of good aspects. The school's warm and welcoming atmosphere offers a high level of care to all its pupils. Staff are committed to ensuring that pupils remain safe and happy, and this is valued by parents. One comments, 'Russell Street has always been a school that puts the pastoral needs of the children first, creating happy, confident children who want to learn.' Pupils enjoy their learning. A noteworthy feature is their good spiritual and moral development, demonstrated by the respect they show to each other and their understanding of the school's systems to promote good behaviour. Because of this pupils behave well, especially in closely supervised situations such as when they move around the school, when behaviour is often impeccable. The school is at the heart of the local community, enabling pupils to benefit from and play a good part in the life of the locality. This is a strength of the school.

The school's current aim is to combine the good level of care offered to pupils with ensuring they do as well as they can academically. By looking carefully at the work of pupils and teachers, the school is now identifying ways of raising standards which are currently average, reflecting satisfactory achievement across the school. This picture has remained constant since the last inspection, although in 2007 there was a dip in standards and pupils did less well in reading and writing due to staffing and leadership instability. More rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress is leading the school to judge achievement more effectively. By ensuring pupils of all ages learn about the links between letters and sounds (phonics) and are given more opportunities for writing, the school is already beginning to see the impact of its bid to improve standards in writing.

Pupils' satisfactory achievement reflects the impact of satisfactory teaching. In all teaching, good relationships and high expectations of good behaviour are strong features. Although there are some good examples of teachers' marking which praises pupils' efforts and helps them to understand how they can improve, this is not consistently applied across the school. Insufficient attention is paid to ensuring well-paced activities matched to various ability levels. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and literacy skills in other subjects are limited and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped.

Although the school made a start on some of the points raised in the last inspection, a lengthy period of uncertainty due to unsettled leadership meant that little progress was made towards improvement. However, there is now a more settled situation. The school is already benefiting from systems put in place by the new headteacher. Data has been collated to provide a clear overview of pupils' progress; judgements on pupils' attainment have been clarified and staff guided on moderation; the programmes of work for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been revised in order to set out a clear plan of action for each individual. Recognising that the roles of subject leaders are underdeveloped, a numeracy coordinator has been appointed and the roles of all subject leaders revised. In a short space of time, these actions are having a beneficial impact, indicating a strengthening capacity to move the school forward. As a result, the capacity to improve is now satisfactory.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Strong emphasis is placed on the welfare of the children. Great care is taken to ensure they are well looked after and learn through play in a safe environment. Although some aspects of teaching are good, teaching overall is satisfactory because of weaknesses in judging how well children are doing. Too often there is insufficient focus on determining precisely the next steps in learning. In addition, the overall summaries of children's achievements are sometimes too generous. There is a satisfactory balance between the areas of learning, with suitable provision for work outdoors. Some activities are very well planned and generate high levels of enjoyment and involvement. For example, the 'post office' in the Reception classes was very busy with the Christmas post produced by the children. Good opportunities were provided for sorting parcels by estimating their weight, and for practising writing skills as children addressed 'envelopes'. The new headteacher has taken on responsibility for leadership of the EYFS, and is ensuring that staff bring their skills up to date by undertaking training that they had previously missed.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure the needs of all pupils are consistently met.
- Improve the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' learning.
- Ensure managers at all levels develop the skills to enable effective monitoring of provision in order to raise standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Children start school with a range of skills and abilities that are generally in line with those expected for their age. During their time in the EYFS they make satisfactory progress, so that when they join Year 1 most have achieved the goals expected of them. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, so that by the time they leave Year 2, standards are broadly average. In the 2008 national assessments the percentage of pupils reaching expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average, with a good proportion of more able pupils reaching the higher Level 3, especially in reading and writing. However, less able pupils did not do as well as expected, particularly in writing. This has resulted in the school identifying the need to improve writing skills. Although boys did less well than girls in 2008, the school's tracking data shows there is currently no significant difference. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they receive appropriate support. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language do well because of the level of support they receive.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils respond well to the regular opportunities for reflecting on their own progress. For example, the 'Progress Tree' in one of the Year 1 classes encourages pupils to think about how well they are doing. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and learn to understand the

consequences of their actions. Pupils get on well with one another, but opportunities to use initiative or work together in groups are limited, although some pupils take on responsible jobs around school. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of their own and others' cultural traditions. They have a reasonable understanding of how to keep safe and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Involvement in charity fund-raising and community events, such as bulb planting for 'Stony in Bloom' and making lanterns for the 'Stony Lights' celebration, are regular features of school life. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next phase of their education because they make steady progress in literacy and numeracy, but have too few opportunities to use ICT in their daily work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory, although there are some good features. Pupils enjoy practical activities, especially when they are encouraged to work together. For example, during the inspection Year 2 pupils investigated electrical circuits and enthusiastically shared their findings. Teachers deal sensitively but firmly with any inappropriate behaviour, so any disruption to lessons is minimised. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in this aspect, as they do in supporting small groups and individuals in their learning. Good opportunities exist for pupils to share their ideas, although in some lessons pupils are not given enough chance to express themselves verbally and they remain passive during over-long lesson introductions. In these cases, pace is slow and pupils' attention wanes.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Themed events such as the 'Wheels Day', when pupils brought wheeled toys to school, make the curriculum interesting and enjoyable. The 'Forest School' initiative and work with the local Parks Trust promote outdoor learning and are greatly enjoyed by pupils. There is growing evidence of pupils writing more extensively and ongoing work to improve and apply pupils' phonics skills is beginning to have a beneficial impact on attainment in reading and writing. ICT is not used regularly enough because of the shortage of reliable computers. This situation is the same as that reported at the time of the previous inspection. The new headteacher is working to address this issue and replacement machines have been ordered.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Strong emphasis is placed on pastoral care and effective use is made of outside expertise. Pupils who find learning a challenge are suitably supported and participate as fully as possible in all class activities. The school is vigilant about health and safety and child protection matters and keeps the required records to ensure pupils are safe. The quality of academic guidance provided for pupils is satisfactory. Effective systems for tracking how well pupils are doing are now established, although this information is not yet fully used by teachers to help them meet the needs of all. In some cases pupils have individual literacy targets, but this is not consistent practice across the school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The newly appointed headteacher has quickly identified what the school needs to do to improve and has set the wheels in motion. The recently revised school development plan prioritises initiatives most needed by the school, several of which are already in place. New links are being forged with other educational agencies and institutions to enrich provision for pupils and extend the expertise of staff, while well-established links with parents and the local community are being strengthened even further. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff are working together to achieve challenging targets in a bid to raise standards. As a result, there is a common vision and high aspirations for pupils. The governing body is highly supportive of the school and is fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses. As many members of the governing body are new to the role, governance is currently satisfactory. However, they are keen to hone their skills in the bid to move the school forward.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

05 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Russell Street School,Stony Stratford,MK11 1BT

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing you at work and play and talking to you. We would like to tell you what we think about your school.

We think your school looks after you well. Your headteacher and teachers work hard to care for you and make sure you are happy. They want you to behave and do well. You are good at taking care of each other and you know how you should behave. We think you have lots of good chances to learn outdoors and take part in events that happen in Stony Stratford.

Here are some of things we have suggested to make your school even better. We would like the adults who decide what you will learn to help you do even better in all subjects. We have asked teachers to make sure they keep you busy in lessons and to give you work that is not too hard or too easy, but just right. We think it will help you if you know how well you are doing and how you can do better.

We hope you will always enjoy coming to school and that your work gets better and better. We are sure you can help the school, especially if you concentrate as hard as you can in all your lessons.

Yours faithfully

Vivienne McTiffen

Lead Inspector