

Studlands Rise First School

Studlands Rise, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 9HB

Inspection dates

26–27 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads the school with passion, knowledge and determination. She has challenged complacency and created a vibrant and professional learning community which has a number of emerging outstanding features.
- Other leaders fulfil their responsibilities with commitment and enthusiasm. They are well supported to develop the skills necessary to fulfil their roles effectively.
- Governors benefit from the open collegiate approach of leaders. They maintain an informed overview of the school's work and have inventive approaches to validating their understanding of the school's work.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. They work hard to engage pupils in understanding what they are expected to do and learn. Pupils say they want to get to school in the mornings because 'we love our lessons'.
- Children are very well supported to make a successful start to their education in the Nursery class. They make good progress and a high proportion reach a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Overall, pupils' attainment is high. Over time, the vast majority of pupils have made good and better progress to reach standards that are at or above the expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 4.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary when they are learning, moving around school and at play. Staff use rewards and sanctions in line with school policy at all times. Successes are shared and celebrated so pupils develop confidence and try hard to do their best.
- The high levels of trust and respect modelled between staff are reflected in the relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils say that they feel very safe at school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some activities for lower attaining pupils are not planned well enough to enable them to overcome the barriers to their learning and enable them to work and learn independently.
- Changes in staffing have affected the quality of pupils' work in a small number of instances.
- Some of leaders' monitoring does not identify the aspects of provision that are weaker than others. For example, the quality of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar as they move through the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - planning learning activities for lower attaining pupils that match their needs, enable them to overcome the barriers to their learning and make good progress
 - ensuring teachers carefully monitor the progress pupils make in improving their handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation as they progress through the school.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - making sure that leaders' monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is specific enough to identify when aspects of the curriculum are not improving as well as others and pupils are not being challenged at the right level in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Staff, pupils and parents are unanimous in their recognition of the difference the headteacher is making to the school. They are confident in her leadership and know that expectations are aspirational, underperformance challenged and success celebrated.
- Staff morale is high. The headteacher has effectively created an enthusiastic and cohesive leadership team highly committed to the success of the school and its pupils. Responsibilities for monitoring teaching and achievement are increasingly distributed. In some instances, monitoring is not specific enough to give leaders the information necessary to ensure all aspects of teaching and learning are of an equally high standard.
- Staff have been well supported to develop their practice through a range of different training opportunities. These are carefully linked to the aspects of their work that need to improve and include visits to other schools with the headteacher to observe and reflect on practice. Performance management procedures are used effectively to both challenge and reward staff regarding the quality of their work.
- Leaders took early action to implement systems for analysing pupils' progress against the new curriculum requirements. Pupils' achievement is regularly reviewed. However, although the systems in place are giving teachers a strong understanding of how well pupils are achieving, they are not always used well enough to identify the specific strategies that are needed to help pupils overcome the difficulties some face in their learning.
- The additional funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is used to support their personal and academic development well. Pupils are enabled to access additional tuition, wider activities, and trips, which are helping to accelerate their progress and increase their attainment.
- Because they are involved in their creation, staff implement policies consistently and with care. This has resulted in strong improvements. For example, in the exemplary behaviour of pupils and the effective use of strategies both to help pupils understand what they are learning and to provide them with feedback about how well they have done.
- The curriculum is well planned, subjects are meaningfully linked and are taught in ways that interest and engage the pupils. There are particular strengths in physical education and science. Skills are taught progressively and the headteacher has made sure that teachers have the necessary expertise to teach the range of subjects they are responsible for. For example, a music specialist has been employed both to teach the children and to build teachers' expertise.
- Leaders are making very good use of the primary physical education and sports funding. Pupils, including children in the early years, make good progress in developing a range of skills because they are taught by a specialist coach. They concentrate particularly well in their lessons. An increasing number of pupils attend the good range of extra-curricular sporting clubs including a very successful cycling club.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is taught well. Pupils learn about respect and tolerance and can explain what these mean in relation to their daily lives. They increasingly understand the diversity of life in modern Britain because plans recently implemented to improve their understanding of different cultures and religions are effective.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school; they overwhelmingly say that their children are happy and taught well. They appreciate their regular opportunities to visit classes and share their children's learning. As one said, 'We are delighted with the quality of teaching and the head, the family atmosphere, the rewards system and discipline and the interaction with other schools in Royston which extends the experiences available to the children.'
- Leaders work in strong partnership with other local schools in Royston. They draw on specialist knowledge, for example regarding provision for pupils with special educational needs. They use this well to improve their own work. The headteacher has started to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning with other leaders and this is validating her perspective. Relationships with the local authority are strong. An improvement partner supports analysis of the school's work and helps governors set appropriately challenging targets for the headteacher.
- The school's breakfast club provides a good range of activities for pupils who attend. Staff are appropriately trained and a healthy lifestyle is promoted through the breakfast options offered. A pupil commented, 'I love coming to breakfast club.'

■ The governance of the school

- Governors are highly appreciative of the open collegiate ethos established by the headteacher. They are fully engaged in the strategic identification of priorities leaders are working to address in order to improve the school. They have a good understanding of pupils' achievement. Minutes of their meetings show they question and challenge leaders to ensure they have an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing.
 - Carefully planned weeks during which governors undertake a variety of activities to understand the school well are highly effective in enabling them to meet with teachers and link leaders. They visit classes, talk to children and, in partnership with leaders, look at aspects of the school's work that are being improved. This leads to them having a deeper understanding of the use of resources and whether actions being taken are effective.
 - Governors are well informed about the use and impact of the extra funding received to support disadvantaged pupils and for sports education. Their processes for challenging leaders regarding the use of resources, for example the recent investment in mathematics equipment, are robust.
 - Procedures for managing the performance of the headteacher and staff are equally rigorous. Governors take external advice on evaluating how well the headteacher is doing and work with her to ensure that staff performance is appropriately monitored, challenged or rewarded. They develop their own questionnaires for staff to establish whether their needs are well met and their performance well managed. Exit interviews, undertaken when Year 4 pupils leave, are used to ascertain how well pupils and parents feel the school has met their needs.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures for recording staff suitability to work with children are efficient and well maintained. Well supported by governors, the headteacher has relentlessly pursued ensuring the premises are safe. Safe recruitment and child protection training are up to date. The school has appropriate procedures in place to ensure vulnerable pupils are protected; the headteacher is relentless in ensuring their needs are met. Risks to pupils are well understood and addressed, staff have participated in 'Prevent' training to raise their awareness of the risks of radicalisation and the headteacher will also train members of the governing body.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The guidance given to teachers is continually improving the quality of their work. There have previously been a number of changes, both temporary and permanent. They have resulted in pupils in a small number of instances not reaching the high standards the school expects. These changes have been well managed and the current staff are now developing practice as a strong, professional collegiate team.
- Teachers plan learning experiences for pupils carefully. Expectations are made clear and pupils are involved in evaluating how well their learning meets these. They are given detailed feedback from teachers' assessments both verbally and in marking about how well they are doing. This feedback identifies misconceptions or challenges them to make the next steps in their learning. Where pupils' own feedback on the learning tasks is strongest, they use reference to the learning behaviours they are taught to identify why they have done well.
- Teachers assess pupils' work carefully. They use this information to make sure that the vast majority of pupils are challenged to succeed at above average levels. The information they gather is used well to identify any aspects of the curriculum that pupils are not learning well in.
- Where teaching is best, teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to explain new ideas and concepts very clearly. As a result, pupils enjoy mastering and using their new skills. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, because of effective questioning and modelling, pupils enthusiastically used their knowledge of calculation strategies well to solve challenging problems.
- Teachers consider the different needs of pupils when they plan lessons. Most lessons are challenging and set a high level of expectation. This meets the needs of the majority of pupils and enables them to make good and better progress in their learning. The small number of pupils who are working below age related expectations, and who have barriers to their learning, are not well enough supported to overcome these and develop skills that will help them learn independently and well.
- In many instances, the extra support pupils receive from teaching assistants is skilled so it helps pupils to learn well. However, some of the extra provision in one-to-one and small group situations is not well enough planned to meet the pupils' needs. This means that although support is well focused and empathetic, it helps pupils complete tasks they find too challenging, rather than moving their learning on.

- Leaders have ensured that the teaching of phonics is strong. Adults model letter sounds well so that pupils in Key Stage 1 develop good skills that help them read and make plausible attempts at spelling. In Key Stage 2, when teachers do not identify errors in pupils' handwriting, spelling and wider grammatical work sufficiently, these skills are not reliably improved.
- Homework tasks are regularly set and used to enhance pupils' understanding of the topics they are studying. High standards are achieved in this work. For example, in a display of pupils' research into famous scientists and in a display of weather recording.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. From starting in the Nursery, throughout the school, pupils are cared for very well. Procedures for sharing information about pupils' welfare are established, known by staff and used when necessary. Pupils say they feel 'totally safe' in school.
- Pupils talk confidently about the way they are taught to keep safe. They describe fire drills, learning about road and scooter safety, as well as a developing an understanding of internet safety.
- High levels of respect and trust are evident in relationships at all levels. Pupils are taught values such as respect and tolerance and show good understanding of what they mean in discussion and in the way they treat each other in lessons and at play.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are taught effectively. Through their topic work and assemblies pupils learn about different religions, 'fair play' and positive attitudes. They know the difference between right and wrong and demonstrate thoughtful, caring attitudes to each other.
- The focus given to sporting activities in and out of school, the quality of school lunches and breakfast at the breakfast club, along with aspects of topic work all contribute meaningfully to pupils' excellent understanding of healthy lives and healthy eating.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. At all times during the school day pupils conduct themselves well. They are kind and courteous. Pupils play together happily at lunchtimes and enjoy the company of their friends when they are eating.
- The school behaviour policy is implemented consistently. As a result, pupils know what is expected and what happens in terms of sanctions and rewards. The behaviour log shows that incidents are infrequent and are dealt with quickly with families being involved as necessary. Pupils who have special educational needs which impact on their behaviour are managed and cared for well.
- The atmosphere in classrooms is calm and industrious. Pupils work hard and enjoy sharing their thoughts and ideas with their friends and with the adults they work with. These positive relationships enable pupils to try new ideas and to have a go at unfamiliar tasks. Because of their growing confidence, pupils invariably apply themselves to their work with high levels of commitment and enthusiasm.
- Pupils are taught key learning behaviours such as resilience. They know they are expected to try hard and that it's 'okay to learn from mistakes'. In some classes, they use these values when they evaluate how well they have done in their learning. Such reflection enables them to understand how much their own attitude can influence how successful they are.
- Attendance overall is above the national average. Pupils say they love coming to school because they love their learning. The attendance of a small group of disadvantaged pupils is currently below that of other pupils. There is however, good evidence to demonstrate that this is appropriately monitored and the reasons are well founded.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been significantly high at the end of Key Stage 1 over a number of years. Assessment records show that these standards have also been sustained at the end of Year 4 when pupils leave to join middle school.
- A larger proportion of pupils than nationally start Year 1 having reached a good level of development at the

end of Reception. This is replicated at the end of the year in the high proportion reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check and in the proportion attaining above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Most pupils make at least expected progress and a significant proportion exceed this.

- Historic changes in teaching have meant that, in some instances, pupils have made less progress. While leaders have acted quickly to address this, the achievement of some pupils in their current work reflects standards that are good but not as high as they have been. As pupils move through the school, historic gaps in learning caused by previously weaker teaching have not been completely addressed. As a result, for example, the standard of some aspects of pupils' writing including handwriting, grammar, punctuation and spelling remains good rather than outstanding.
- Numbers of pupils in different groups are very small so the attainment of disadvantaged pupils cannot be reported against national standards at the end of Year 2 because it would be possible to identify individuals. Across the school, the progress of different groups is variable, some is exceptional but it is overall good. Pupils with significant levels of special needs are well supported and make at least expected progress from their starting points.
- The work and learning of lower attaining pupils who encounter barriers to making progress shows that they do not regularly receive strong enough teaching to enable them to make similarly good progress as their peers. This is evident in all subjects including their early reading.
- Pupils make good progress in science; their work shows a mix of investigation and knowledge acquisition, their work in art shows they develop a range of skills and strong understanding of different media. The specialist teaching they receive in physical education and music means they develop skills and understanding well in these subjects as they do in religious education. When they leave Year 4, they are well prepared to face the challenges of learning in the next phase of their education.

Early years provision

is good

- From starting points that are broadly in line with, and sometimes above, those typical for their age, children get off to a flying start in the Nursery class. The beginning of their time in school is managed very carefully. Consequently, parents feel confident that the school understands their children's needs and makes appropriate provision to help them feel safe and learn well. Their views are carefully taken into account when children's learning and progress are reviewed by staff.
- Activities in the Nursery are exciting and enable children to make good progress in all areas of their learning. Children excitedly played in their 'dinosaur den' responding quickly and with interest as their teacher questioned them about their play and learning. Already strong in most cases, communication skills are developed effectively through these activities and there are plentiful opportunities for children to use and develop their imagination.
- Very good communication between staff means that children are helped to learn well. By the time they move to the Reception class, children have made very good progress. Staff use information about children's learning and personal development effectively to help a smooth transition.
- In both the early years classes, staff record how well children are learning and the progress they are making regularly. New systems have been developed so that it is easy to see how well children are doing and what gaps there are in their learning. These are efficient and mean new activities are planned to extend and develop children's thinking.
- Parents are confident in, and happy with, the early years provision. They are involved well in sharing understanding of their children's learning with staff. Opportunities for parents to share 'wow' aspects of their children's development outside school are plentiful. Staff use this information to enhance their provision for children and to celebrate their successes.
- At times, however, activities limit the extent to which children can use their imagination and be creative in using the new skills they are learning. This is because resources are restricted and they spend too long on the same task. As a result, some children lose interest and confidence in how successful they can be.
- Pupils are supported very effectively to develop personal and social skills. An exemplary piece of teaching in the Nursery helped children to develop dressing skills as they prepared for their sports lesson. Under the beautifully crafted advice of their teacher, children blossomed as they helped each other remember dressing sequences and expectations for leaving their clothes ready for when they returned. In the ensuing physical education session their behaviour was outstanding as they focused on activities developing their coordination skills enthusiastically. They were exceptionally well encouraged by adults who carefully guided

them.

- Arrangements to safeguard children are appropriate. The early years leader is knowledgeable and reflective. She shares her infectious enthusiasm with other staff who work well together indoors and outside to help children learn and progress well. As a result, by the time they leave Reception children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	117331
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10010929

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Craig Charter
Headteacher	Miss Alison Doke
Telephone number	01763 243930
Website	www.studlandsrise.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@studlandsrise.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 July 2011

Information about this school

- Studlands Rise First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils transfer to middle school at the end of Year 4. There is no nationally reported assessment information at this point.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for extra support through the pupil premium is well below the national average. (The pupil premium is extra government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, service children and children looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is well below the national average. No pupils currently have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has a breakfast club which runs from 7.45am to 8.45am before school. It is managed by the governing body so was considered as part of this inspection.
- Leaders work closely with the other local schools in Royston.
- Since the last inspection the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed. A new leadership team was created at the start of the academic year.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons or parts of lessons. Some of these were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. During these times they looked at pupils' books and talked to pupils about their work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, five middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, a group of pupils, five governors and the Hertfordshire school improvement partner.
- Account was taken of the 53 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire; the 20 text responses from parents and a written response. An inspector met with a group of four parents to further understand their views.
- Inspectors scrutinised leaders' improvement planning, evaluation of the school's work, monitoring of teaching and pupils' work, minutes of governor meetings and records of their visits to school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at lunch and at playtimes. An inspector visited breakfast club.
- Fifteen members of staff responded to the staff questionnaire. These responses were taken account of by inspectors.

Inspection team

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