

The Royal First School

The Great Park, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 2HP

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved considerably since the last inspection; it is back to 'its fabulous self' as one parent described it. The new headteacher has, in a short time, made a very positive impression on parents and staff. Parents are involved more fully in their children's learning and kept well informed through the regular workshops and meetings with staff.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved over the past two years as a result of more frequent and well-targeted training and support from leaders, the local authority and diocese. Teachers with subject responsibilities now play an effective part in improving teaching and learning in their areas.
- The school makes good use of the excellent facilities and space afforded by its location in the park. Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Children get off to a secure start in the early years due to the good provision there. Pupils' standards across the school have risen steadily in the past few years. Current pupils are making at least good progress in all year groups in most subjects, including English and mathematics. Writing and reading, including phonics, are particularly well taught.
- The way that the school looks after pupils' welfare and promotes their personal development is outstanding. Pupils are well known by staff and their emotional and social development is carefully looked after, as well as their academic progress. By Year 4, pupils have developed into confident and articulate learners who are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They say that they feel safe. Pupils enjoy learning and take pride in how they present their work. Pupils attend regularly.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress across the school, especially in reading and writing. However, sometimes the work they are given in mathematics does not stretch them enough, which slows their progress.
- Governors know the school well and are passionate about ensuring its success. They keep themselves well informed through, for example, regular visits to the school. Governors are less sure about the progress of pupils across the school, because the information they are given by leaders is not as clear as it could be.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the work for the most able pupils is suitably challenging in mathematics by reviewing the curriculum and how it is taught to ensure that the most able pupils are not held back by being given work that is too easy for them.
- Improve the way that information about the progress of pupils across the school is presented to governors, so that it is easier for them to interpret.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The way that the school is led and managed has improved significantly since the last inspection. The improvements have been highly praised by staff and parents. Recent improvements were described by parents as 'wonderful' and 'phenomenal'. The newly appointed headteacher has successfully built on changes introduced last year by the interim headteacher. The parents are delighted with some of the recent developments, such as being met by the headteacher in the morning and the workshops where curriculum developments (such as phonics) are explained. They feel more involved now as partners in their children's education.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school and determined to bring about further improvements. The staff have been energised and inspired by the new headteacher. They say that teamwork has improved and that they feel valued and more involved in decisions. Leaders have established good links with other schools. Teachers have benefited from the opportunity to visit other schools, where they have, for example, compared their assessments of pupils' work.
- Teaching has improved as a result of clearer expectations from school leaders and through the introduction of more consistent approaches for the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Subject leaders have responded with enthusiasm to being given greater responsibility for their areas. For example, the English and mathematics coordinator has been given time to check teaching and learning in these subjects and to support individuals and provide training sessions. Subject leaders now report on developments in their areas directly to the governing body. Subject leaders appreciate the training opportunities they have had and the practical support from the local authority and diocese.
- Education advisers from the local authority and diocese have provided timely, well-regarded and coordinated support, advice and training. They have confidence in the new headteacher and her capacity to build on improvements introduced by the executive headteacher last year.
- The school curriculum is well organised to ensure that pupils experience all subjects of the national curriculum. Appropriate emphasis is given to literacy, mathematics and religious education. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of trips to places inside and outside the park. Pupils described making 'Tudor houses' in the woods. Much of the science learning takes place in the park, where pupils learn about the plants and wildlife. French is now taught by a specialist teacher. Pupils participate in a range of after-school and lunchtime activities over the school year, including clubs for sewing, gymnastics, golf, Pilates, dance and music.

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. These aspects permeate the life of the school and the curriculum. Pupils are taught about British values in assemblies and in subjects such as personal, social and health education, and religious education. They have learned about a range of different religions and cultures, and have links with schools in other countries and settings. The promotion of equalities is at the heart of the school's philosophy. Pupils are learning tolerance for others and about democracy and the rule of law. They took part in a mock referendum about leaving the European Union last year. The school has well-established links with the local parish and pupils benefit from being able to visit the Royal Chapel.
- Leaders have acted with some success to identify and meet the needs of the most able pupils, from the early years onwards. The progress of the most able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and how they will be supported are discussed in meetings between teachers and leaders.
- The additional funds for disadvantaged pupils are used appropriately. Leaders have identified the pupils' barriers to success, such as poor attendance, and effectively tailored activities to overcome them. The funds are used in a variety of ways including providing small-group and one-to-one support and paying for equipment, trips and clubs. Leaders keep a close track on the participation of disadvantaged pupils in after-school clubs.
- The physical education and sport premium funds have also been used effectively. The school has bought into the Windsor Sports Partnership, which has provided training for staff and leadership training for pupils. New equipment has been bought to increase the range of sports offered. More pupils are now participating in physical activities and in competitions with other schools.
- Parents play an important role in the life of the school. There is a thriving parents' association that has raised considerable sums of money. For example, the funds raised helped to pay for the refurbishment and resources for the attractive school library.

Governance of the school

- Governors have responded effectively to the criticisms of their role at the last inspection. A review of governance was undertaken, and governors have implemented the suggested areas for improvement. They have received a range of training, including in performance data, and have reviewed the committee structure. They now have a better understanding of performance data and are more confident about challenging leaders to explain the outcomes at the end of key stages. They give priority to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make good progress and that additional funds are used effectively.
- Governors have a breadth of appropriate experience and skills. They are highly committed to the school and ambitious for its continuing success. They fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities.
- Since the last inspection, governors have increasingly undertaken frequent visits to observe practice for themselves. Individual governors have started to track the progress of a small group of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Governors are knowledgeable about the school curriculum and recent developments. They are very supportive of the new headteacher.

- Governors are aware of the performance of pupils in key assessments such as the phonics screening check and the results at the end of key stage 1 and how these have changed over the years. They are less sure about how pupils in all year groups are progressing because the information they are given by school leaders is difficult to interpret.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are vigilant about ensuring pupils' safety and this is an integral part of the school's culture. Staff and volunteers have been appropriately vetted. Training about safeguarding and child protection is up to date. Staff and governors attended a training session about the 'Prevent' duty during the inspection week. Staff know how to identify and report concerns about pupils. Governors keep a close eye on safeguarding and it is always on the agenda for governors' meetings. A link governor meets regularly with the school's designated safeguarding lead to check on how safeguarding is managed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants have established positive relationships with pupils and they manage pupils' behaviour well. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. They indicate clearly to pupils in writing and/or orally what needs to improve. Pupils can describe what their next steps are and older pupils are encouraged to select their own targets for improvement. The school's marking policy is applied consistently by staff.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and make learning fun. They are often creative in helping pupils to understand concepts, for example, using hoops to represent Venn diagrams, and 'crocodiles' to remember greater than or less than symbols. Staff make good use of the excellent facilities and resources in the park for a range of subjects, including science, history and geography, as well as a stimulus for writing. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils visited the nearby Royal Vineyard. The following day they responded enthusiastically to the task of ordering and describing photographs of the visit, as a precursor to writing an account of the trip.
- Leaders carefully track the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need to catch up. These pupils are given additional help in class or in small groups or one-to-one sessions, which helps them to make good progress.
- Reading, writing and phonics are taught consistently well and this ensures that pupils are making good progress in these subjects. Pupils are given opportunities to write at length in literacy and other subjects. They write in a variety of styles, including newspaper articles, stories, accounts of scientific investigations and poetry.
- Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. Teachers are increasingly encouraging pupils to describe their reasoning and to find different ways of finding solutions to problems. Work in pupils' books includes an appropriate range of mathematics topics including numbers, shape and space, and problem solving. Older pupils also explain their choice of method in their mathematics books.

- Teachers aim to provide work that is appropriate for pupils of different abilities in all subjects. The challenge for the most able pupils has improved. Teachers have high expectations, particularly in terms of pupils' vocabulary and ability to speak fluently and articulately. Pupils are encouraged to read a wide range of demanding texts in English and in topic work. In mathematics, the progress of the most able pupils is sometimes slowed down when they are given work that is too easy for them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are known to staff, who care about their emotional and social needs as well as their academic progress. A teaching assistant has been trained to provide emotional literacy support to children. Several parents spoke about the 'family' feeling in the school and how their children are treated as individuals. There is very effective liaison with parents so that any concerns about their children are picked up and dealt with rapidly.
- Parents appreciate the opportunity to talk to the teachers and visit classes each day as well as having lunch with the children. They were very positive about the way that the new headteacher greets them in the mornings. The headteacher intends to meet every parent individually each term in order to discuss how to work together to support their child. She has already met with parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and with parents of pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and parents and staff agree. Pupils described how they have been taught how to keep safe and said that they would turn to 'the teacher who looks after people's feelings' if they had any concerns. They recalled a visit from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in which they learned how to deal with a 'bag of worries'. Pupils know about different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and keeping safe on the internet. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils showed a good awareness of issues about e-safety when they acted out possible scenarios and discussed how to respond safely.
- Older pupils are proud of the responsibilities they are given in roles such as house and sports captains, ambassadors, and 'buddies' to look after younger children. They show a good understanding of the needs of others including those outside the school; for example, they described how they wanted to raise money to help the victims of the recent hurricane in Haiti. Pupils grow in confidence in the school and develop as articulate and effective learners who are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond well to adults' instructions in lessons and around the school. They understand the system of rewards and sanctions for misbehaviour. They are keen to learn and take pride in presenting their work neatly. Pupils' handwriting develops well through the school.
- Pupils are respectful of each other and adults. They listen politely when others are talking. Pupils said that behaviour is 'mostly good'. They described how some pupils occasionally talk too loudly in lessons or become distracted.

- Pupils' attendance has improved steadily in the last few years and is broadly in line with the national average. The school has worked hard and with success to improve the attendance of a few pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have met with parents and identified strategies to encourage good attendance, such as inviting pupils to early-morning clubs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Standards have risen over the past few years. Children start in the Reception class with a broadly typical range of skills, knowledge and understanding. They make good progress in each year group and in most subjects. There have been improvements in the achievement of boys and in writing across the school, as a result of leaders' focus.
- Results have varied in the past, often because of the very small numbers of pupils involved. However, there has been a broadly rising trend in attainment at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. The 2016 unvalidated results were above the national averages in all three subjects for the proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standard. The result in the phonics screening check also rose last year to 90% of Year 1 children reaching the expected standard. All children succeed when re-tested in Year 2.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in reading. The most able readers do so fluently and with expression. They love reading and happily talk about their favourite books and authors. Less able readers apply their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words as well as recognising some more familiar ones. They enjoy reading and are making good progress. All pupils have opportunities to read to adults at home and in school, including in the attractive and well-stocked library.
- There are very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group so it is difficult to identify year-on-year trends. However, the school's close focus on these pupils has had an impact; the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other (non-disadvantaged) pupils nationally by the end of key stage 1 has decreased in the last few years in reading and mathematics.
- The progress and attainment of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have improved. The proportion of pupils reaching higher than expected standards has been above average in reading, writing and mathematics in the past few years. The most able pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and writing. Their progress in mathematics is sometimes slowed down when they are given work that is too easy.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make at least good progress across the school in most subjects. Parents commented positively on how their children who have special educational needs were given individual attention and helped to make rapid progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are given a secure start in the Reception class. They have settled in well since the beginning of term and are making secure progress across all areas of learning from their different starting points. In the past few years, the proportion of children that leave the Reception class with a good level of development has been above average. Children behave well. They follow instructions and tidy up at the end of sessions. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- The early years is well led and managed. Staff are vigilant about ensuring children's health and safety. They have developed a lively and stimulating learning environment, inside and outside, to promote good opportunities for children to develop all the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding. Outside, children learn to ride tricycles and scooters safely and considerately. Children's social skills are developing well. They play with each other sensibly and respectfully, as seen when a child acted as 'taxi driver'. Other children cooperated well when they were 'delivery drivers' and they asked for signatures on receipt of the 'goods'. Children concentrate well and persevere with activities that they have chosen.
- Teaching is effective. Adults encourage children to speak clearly. They provide ample opportunities for children to 'write', as seen when children used clipboards to 'take the register' and to write down what children wanted for lunch.
- Staff track children's progress regularly, and adapt tasks accordingly. Phonics is taught well and children are making good progress in early writing and reading. Children are also given good opportunities to develop mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Parents are involved effectively in all aspects of their children's learning in the early years. They appreciate the opportunity to add their own comments to their children's learning journey folders. They are very happy with how well their children are progressing in the early years. They said that children were well prepared for life in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	110014
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10019864

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vivien Benn
Headteacher	Beverley Coombridge
Telephone number	01784 434274
Website	www.theroyalschool.org.uk
Email address	Theroyalschool@rbwm.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Royal First School is much smaller than an average-sized primary school. It is the only Crown-aided school in the country, with a history dating back to 1845.
- There are four classes in the school, including a full-time Reception class. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 are taught in separate year groups in the morning and mixed-age groups in the afternoon.
- The majority of pupils are of White British origin, with a few pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan is also below the national average.
- A new headteacher has been in post since September 2016. Last year, the school was led by an interim executive headteacher who is the headteacher of Braywood Church of England First School. The executive headteacher has continued to provide one day of support to The Royal First School.
- The school meets the government's 2015 floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken with the headteacher. The inspector also scrutinised pupils' work in books across all year groups and subjects.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including the headteacher, executive headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. The inspector spoke with a group of 14 parents in an organised meeting on the second day. She spoke with a group of governors and met with the local authority adviser who has supported the school since the last inspection. The inspector also met with the diocesan education adviser who has been supporting the school.
- The inspector spoke with pupils during a formal meeting as well as during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector considered a wide range of documents related to the school's work, including its development plan, self-evaluation report, records of monitoring of teaching and learning, and information about pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. The inspector scrutinised records concerning safeguarding and toured the school site.
- The inspector analysed the 41 responses and 31 written comments submitted to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection as well as two comments sent by email. She also considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 90 responses to the Ofsted survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

Dr Helena McVeigh, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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