



Rusper Primary School, Rusper, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 4PR

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Headteacher: Nick Avey (BEd Hons)

Together we learn, together we succeed

25th January 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope this letter finds you well. We are now able to publish the long-awaited report of our recent **OFSTED** inspection.

It is with deep disappointment and regret that we must inform you that despite many areas of the school being graded as good, the overall effectiveness of the school has been graded as '**Inadequate**' due to some concerns around safeguarding; which have already been addressed/are rapidly being addressed.

This is a negative grade for RPS; and one which we don't believe does justice to the happiness and positive achievements of our wonderful pupils; the significant efforts and commitment of our staff and parental community; and ultimately the effectiveness and positive feel of our beloved village school.

As you will read in the report, there are aspects to be celebrated and others to be improved. We would firstly like to acknowledge the successes.

We are very happy that the report reflects positively on the **Behaviour** and **Wellbeing** development of our pupils – this is something RPS staff work collectively and consistently on each year for the greater good. It reflects just how confidently and politely our pupils conducted themselves during our inspection. As they always do, the children did us proud, and we have told them this.

With regard to curriculum provision at the school, we are thrilled that the excellent development of our **Maths**, **Reading** and **Early Years** curriculum has been recognised. We know our Reception children settle quickly and make rapid progress. We can see already the positive impacts that recent tutoring and 'pre-teaching' strategies are having in maths. We know that our reading provision at the school has helped to deliver excellent outcomes for pupils each year, before and after COVID.

We care about each and every child and we provide high levels of personalised emotional support when it is required. This shows in our report, in the comments related to wellbeing and mental Health.

We do, of course, not shy away from acknowledging that we have clear areas for development, as stated in the report.

In the first instance, there is still more work to be done in further promoting **a love of reading** for children of all ages. Developing our library area to this end is scheduled for before the end of this academic year.

We agree that subjects in the **wider curriculum** such as design technology, music, geography etc can always be further developed to allow children a deeper understanding of the subject areas. However, much work has already been done at Rusper, since 2019, on our wider curriculum and we believe the design of our curriculum is stronger than the report alludes to. We have invested a lot of human and physical resources to the development of most foundation subjects; and there is good evidence in school of positive pupil engagement and retention of knowledge.

Already, since our inspection, school leaders have created a sequenced action plan for review and further mapping of required knowledge in every foundation subject. Additionally, RPS has signed up to the 'Small School's Curriculum Design' project, established to help smaller schools achieve the best curriculum for their children.

In our inspection, **Safeguarding** was graded as 'ineffective'. Leaders at RPS take the inspection findings very seriously.



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We recognise that elements of our practice regarding the recruitment of 3rd party adults (coaches, volunteers etc) was not fully compliant. We accept that safeguarding concerns and the relevant next step actions, including rationales for decision making, need to be more consistently recorded; and that two cases scrutinised in the inspection could have been escalated further to West Sussex multi agency services. We acknowledge the need to be very careful about data protection in sensitive cases.

However, it is emphatically not the case that your children aren't safe at Rusper Primary. All teachers, TAs and office staff have been recruited correctly following strict guidance. We know our children and our families well; and we work with all concerned, pro-actively to protect and affect positive change when it is required. All safeguarding concerns are dealt with a child's safety in mind, applying required processes of risk assessment against threshold statements carefully.

In response to the inspection, West Sussex Safeguarding in Education team have conducted an audit, and a comprehensive action plan has been rapidly created and actions are underway. We now have an additional designated safeguarding lead in Mrs Matthews to join our DSL team. The team meets weekly (and confidentially) to consider cases of concern; and decision making (including the need to escalate) is quality assured before action. Actions arising are recorded systematically.

In short, we will complete full Safeguarding compliance quickly; and continue to promote the safety of all pupils as a priority at all times.

Under the current OFSTED framework, the impact of an ineffective safeguarding judgement is such that **Leadership and Management** has to be graded as 'Inadequate'; and in turn therefore the overall judgement upon the school is required to be 'Inadequate'.

As well being a negative label for the school, Current DfE legislation dictates that all schools graded 'Inadequate' are required to **academise**. This means that we expect shortly to receive an order from the DfE to become part of a bigger school academy trust, within the next two years. This will mean our school will become part of a larger group of schools bound by executive leadership/governance and direct funding from the DfE, rather than the current position of independent leadership/governance and funded via the local authority.

We recognise that there is a lot to take in from this inspection outcome, and we do not underestimate the potential range of emotions that may be felt among our parent community. On behalf of Rusper Primary school we unreservedly apologise for the issues raised in the inspection and their subsequent impacts.

RPS leaders and staff too are processing shock and disappointment; but we are also determined to face the next steps of school improvement and academisation with integrity, courage and strong leadership. We have not collectively worked so hard over the last ten years to give up here. We will improve the school, as required, quickly and with the effective support of the local authority. We hold true to the ethos of school and will strive to maintain all that is good about Rusper Primary for the future.

As a first step, we would like to invite all parents to a meeting whereby Mr Avey, Rusper governors and members of the local authority can discuss the report and its implications in more detail and answer your further questions. The meeting will be held in the Rusper Village Hall at 6:30pm on Thursday 2nd February. Please could we ask that any parents who would like any point addressed at the meeting, submit a question / questions in advance via the google form which accompanies this letter.

Many thanks for your consideration and support

Nick Avey
Headteacher,
Rusper Primary School

Emma Worskett
Chair of Governors,
Rusper Primary School