

Inspection of a good school: Rode Methodist VC First School

High Street, Rode, Frome, Somerset, BA11 6NZ

Inspection dates:

13 March 2023

Outcome

Rode Methodist VC First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Rode Methodist VC First School delivers its aim to 'light the spark' in learning for all pupils. Leaders have created a curriculum that is ambitious and well-considered. They provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils that enable them to flourish.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They commit to their learning and are encouraged to do their best. One parent explained how their child comes home 'brimming with enthusiasm for his topics and chooses to investigate his subjects further at home'.

The three school expectations of 'ready, safe, care' help pupils to develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and actively support each other to learn well. They notice and call out any behaviour that does not meet the high standards expected of them.

Bullying is very uncommon. On the rare occasions that pupils do fall out, teachers resolve this early to make sure that things do not escalate.

Staff forge positive and nurturing relationships with pupils. They are constantly looking for ways to help pupils develop personally. Initiatives such as 'Fifteen things to try before you are nine and three quarters' build pupils' confidence and foster self-esteem.

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

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They have designed the curriculum so it is aspirational for all pupils regardless of their starting points. From the time pupils join the school, teachers provide tasks that set the foundations for further learning. This enables pupils to achieve well.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They use ongoing assessment well to identify and correct pupils' misunderstandings. Teachers ask questions to help pupils recall what they know. This helps pupils to explain their thinking. In some subjects, leaders have identified the essential knowledge that pupils will learn. Where leaders have done this, pupils develop a deep understanding of key concepts and ideas. For example, in history, pupils in Year 3 could describe the concept of legacy, learned during their previous topic on Ancient Greece. They could explain how this applies to the Romans. However, the clarity about essential curriculum knowledge is not yet defined across all subjects. Where the curriculum is not clear assessment is less effective and pupils do not develop as deep an understanding.

Plans to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are comprehensive. Teachers adapt the curriculum to ensure that the learning is accessible. If needed, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works with external partners to make sure that pupils get expert help. This means that all pupils' needs are well met.

Leaders recognise that reading is central to learning across the whole curriculum. The reading curriculum is well-structured. Staff develop and celebrate pupils' enthusiasm for reading. They read stories and poems to pupils with gusto and expression. Consequently, pupils have a wide knowledge of literature. From Reception, children develop a secure understanding of the skills they need to read. Consequently they are well-prepared for Year 1. . For pupils at the early stages of reading staff provide books that give pupils practice in using the sounds that make words. When pupils have grasped these skills, teachers support pupils to apply them in reading, spelling and writing. The pupils who need to catch up in reading, some of whom have SEND have effective additional help.

In lessons, almost all pupils listen and respond well to adults and each other. On the rare occasions that pupils become distracted, teachers provide timely, positive reminders to bring pupils back to task.

The school provides rich experiences that help to 'bring learning to life'. Pupils enjoy a range of trips and extra-curricular clubs including dancing, yoga, drama and football. Curriculum topics finish with a final event such as a performance, the making of a movie, or a presentation. These showcase pupils' achievements and talents. The school's work to enhance pupils' personal development enables them to understand different faiths and religions. However, pupils have less knowledge of cultures that are different to their own. This is because the curriculum is less defined about this aspect of pupils' personal development.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, know their school well. They celebrate the strengths of the school and prioritise the right areas for improvement. Staff feel valued as part of a supportive team. They are grateful for leaders' considerate and thoughtful actions to ensure that their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are trained to know about a range of risks, including those in their local area. They identify and manage concerns well. Leaders make referrals to local safeguarding partners to ensure that pupils and families get the help they need quickly.

All pupils feel safe at school. The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) teaches them to keep themselves safe online, in the wider community and how parts of their bodies are private.

Governors monitor safeguarding work well. They make sure that the necessary checks are carried out to ensure staff are safe to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not clearly identified the essential knowledge that pupils need. In these subjects, assessment does not give teachers an accurate picture of what pupils know and what they still have to learn. Consequently, pupils do not develop and secure a deep understanding of concepts and knowledge they need. Leaders should clarify the curriculum and models of assessment in these subjects so that pupils gain essential knowledge across the whole curriculum.
- The curriculum has not been designed to improve pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. As a result, pupils do not know about cultures different to their own. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum helps pupils to learn about different cultures and customs.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 20–21 September 2017.

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	123823
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10256776
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Caroline Whitehead
Headteacher	Georgina Muxworthy
Website	www.rodeandnortonschoolfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 – 21 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Rode and Norton St Philip federation of schools. The school is federated with Norton St Philip Church of England first school.
- Since the last inspection, there has been significant change to the leadership team. There is a new headteacher, new senior teacher and new SENCo.
- The school is a Methodist school. Its last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools was in June 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, designated safeguarding lead, groups of staff, pupils, a representative from the local authority, and members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the documentation around safeguarding, including the safeguarding checks made on staff. They talked to governors, staff and pupils about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff to see how leaders support their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the 27 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 12 free-text responses, and 13 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Steph Matthews, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Musty

Ofsted Inspector

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