

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103457
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376909
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
Lead inspector	Doris Bell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stefan Laszczyk
Headteacher	Mary Daniels
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2007
School address	Sisefield Road Kings Norton Birmingham B38 9JB
Telephone number	0121 4641546
Fax number	0121 4642650
Email address	enquiry@stpaulrc.bham.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	6–7 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Doris Bell

Additional inspector

Christine Merrick

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed eight members of staff during 12 lessons, covering approximately 6.5 hours of teaching. As well as observing full- or part-lessons, inspectors visited sessions where pupils were learning letters and sounds or being taught in small groups or individually. They also heard pupils read, analysed their work, and discussed their learning and school life with them. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaires (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including information relating to the attainment and achievement of all groups of pupils, the school improvement plan, governing body minutes, and evidence of monitoring and evaluation. They also spoke to parents and carers, and analysed 42 parental questionnaire responses, together with the responses to the questionnaires returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This average-sized school has a high proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is also high. The school has an above average proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, mostly relating to speech, language and communication needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average. Although a small number of these pupils speak English as an additional language, none are at the early stages of learning English. The school runs a before-school club for its pupils each school day. It meets the government's current floor standard, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. There has been good improvement in the issues identified at the previous inspection and, despite high numbers of pupils leaving and joining the school outside the usual times, pupils continue to achieve well. The school is not yet outstanding because further improvement is needed in writing and in mathematics, particularly to help more pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels.
- Pupils join the Early Years Foundation Stage approximately 18 months behind where they should be in language, communication, and number. The gap narrows considerably as pupils move through the school, and they leave with broadly average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. All groups of pupils make good progress, but more-able pupils do not do so consistently.
- The quality of teaching is good. Marking is effective in helping pupils see how to improve. Teachers use assessment information effectively in planning. They do not always give pupils enough opportunities to write at length, however, nor do they always move more-able pupils quickly enough onto the more challenging work planned for them in lessons.
- Behaviour is good in and around the school and pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. Boys, girls and pupils from different backgrounds and cultures mix well together in the safe, secure learning environment provided for them.
- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides clear direction for the staff, fostering a commitment to the school and the community that is summed up in her statement 'It's not where the children come from, it's where we can get them to that matters.' Teaching is rigorously checked for its impact on learning. Performance is managed well and carefully selected professional development opportunities ensure everyone works purposefully towards the school's clearly stated priorities.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing by:
 - giving all pupils more frequent opportunities to write at length
 - instilling in pupils the value of using their writing targets at all times.
- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics by
 - fostering secure calculation skills in Nursery and Reception, including through activities children select for themselves
 - providing more opportunities for pupils throughout the school to use and apply their mathematical learning in real-life problem solving
 - moving more-able pupils onto more challenging work sooner in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Inspection findings match the views of parents, carers and pupils, all of whom say progress is good. The vast majority of pupils make good progress, whatever their age when they join the school. Despite their good progress in Nursery and Reception, children start Year 1 with literacy and numeracy skills that are still below average for their age. In Year 2, pupils are less than three months behind in reading and mathematics, but as much as a year behind in writing. Writing remains the weakest of the three in Year 6 too, but is only three months behind at that stage. Overall attainment is broadly average in Year 6.

Attainment in reading is broadly average in Year 2 and Year 6, and it is improving. Pupils enjoy reading. They make good use of their growing knowledge of letters and sounds to help them read unfamiliar words. They understand the importance of learning to read properly saying, for example, 'We need to read lots to learn more and to give us ideas for our writing'. Pupils write in different styles for different audiences and purposes, and in a range of subjects, although they do not always remember their writing targets when they do so. Pupils do not have frequent enough opportunities to write at length because the build-up to a 'big write' is too long. The Year 6 project encouraging writing at length in a different style each week is beginning to address this issue. For example, their letters applying for jobs in a haunted Tudor mansion demonstrated a good ability to write persuasively within a formal context.

The range of time-limited challenges at the start of mathematics lessons is successfully sharpening pupils' ability to calculate mentally. Pupils in Year 3 used what they learned in theirs to help them work out different methods of addition later in the lesson. However, pupils have too few opportunities to use and apply their

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mathematical skills in everyday situations, for example, through solving mathematical problems.

Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as other pupils. Their learning is broken down into smaller steps and they receive good support from well-briefed support staff. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also make good progress. The good progress made by pupils known to be eligible for free school meals means that the gap between their learning and that of other pupils is significantly narrower than is found nationally.

Quality of teaching

Parents, carers and pupils rightly say that teaching is good. Teachers plan work well for the wide range of ability evident in most classes. For example, more-able pupils in Year 1 used rulers to measure as accurately as possible, while less-able pupils, assisted by an adult, learned the principles of measuring, and concentrated on writing numerals correctly to record their findings. Teachers help pupils to see how using what they have already learned can help them with new learning.

Teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' progress and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given time to reflect on their learning, to respond to marking, and to talk with a partner to clarify their thinking before answering questions. Teachers skilfully direct questions at different pupils to ensure all are equally involved in lessons and given the chance to succeed. Steps to success are visited regularly to ensure learning is on track, and adjustments made where necessary to keep it so. Pupils know their targets and what to do to reach them. They understand the assessment systems, commenting that 'as soon as we complete one thing, there's something else for us to do'. More challenging work is always planned for more-able pupils. However, pupils sometimes have to complete simpler tasks unnecessarily before tackling it. This limits their progress.

When given the opportunity to choose their own way of working, pupils respond well. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, when they were encouraged to choose how to re-tell the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, they set enthusiastically about writing playscripts, letters and diaries. The teacher's help in recalling the features of each type of writing contributed to their good progress. However, teaching is sometimes too directed, leaving pupils little opportunity to drive some of their learning. In the Nursery and Reception classes, assessment processes are used well to track and improve children's learning in adult-directed activities. However, adults miss opportunities to move learning on as it occurs in activities children select for themselves.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents and carers say that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils say they feel very safe and secure in school. They know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school, including when using computers and mobile phones. They trust staff to

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help them should they have any concerns. They understand the different types of bullying such as persistent name calling, or physical harassment, report that they know of none, and that they know what to do should any occur. Pupils have a strong voice in the school, for example, through the school council and in their roles as trained peer mediators. They explain how incident logs are used to record 'any sort of meanness', and what happens as a result. The logs record a small number of racist comments, mostly name calling, which the school deals with appropriately. Parents, carers and pupils agree that, typically, behaviour is good. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons, instilling in them self-discipline and a good awareness of the impact of their actions on others. The good behaviour in the playground is assisted by the well-supervised use of a good range of play equipment.

Pupils have a good understanding of why it is important to follow a healthy lifestyle. They make healthy food choices, and appreciate the wide range of sporting activities available at different times in the school year. They thoroughly enjoy school, often arriving early to take part in the gardening club, to check and respond to marking comments, or to undertake the good range of activities available to them before school starts officially. These activities, and the before-school club that starts even earlier, ensure pupils are well prepared for the school day. The school successfully ensures that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds can take a full part in everything it has to offer. Pupils in Year 6 who have been with the school since nursery, and those who joined it in later years, all say that 'this school is a friendly school' where 'everyone cares for everybody else'.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers, including the governing body, foster effective teamwork throughout the school, and a high level of commitment to ensuring pupils do as well as they can, regardless of when they join the school. Professional development is used effectively to improve teaching and learning, and leaders at different levels check its impact on pupils' progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well. Pupils successfully learn the difference between right and wrong. They are strongly encouraged to develop key qualities such as resilience and perseverance, appreciation of the world around them, and respect for all who inhabit it. They vote at regular intervals for the pupil they consider has shown these qualities well. Self-evaluation is accurate and well-founded. Well-considered priorities show that the school knows what it needs to do to improve further. Taken alongside the good improvement since the previous inspection, all of this demonstrates the school's strong capacity for sustained improvement.

The governing body uses its wide-ranging expertise effectively to hold the school to account. All safeguarding requirements are met and there are no areas of concern. The school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils and their families are well supported, especially when their circumstances may make them more vulnerable. It uses its good partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies well to enable this to happen. It promotes equality of opportunity well by, for example, successfully tackling any form of discrimination, breaking down stereotypes and ensuring the

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school is a harmonious community. The programmes to help pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs are carefully monitored to ensure they assist progress, and the school has rightly turned its attention to improving provision for more-able pupils. The restructured curriculum is broad and well-balanced. It brings subjects together in topics that interest pupils and make them want to learn. It focuses well on the key skills in different subjects, although literacy skills are supported better than numeracy skills in topic work.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B38 9JB

Thank you for the really warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school, and for talking with us about what you do there. It was great to see how much you enjoy school, and how quickly set about the tasks that were waiting for you. You go to a good school, where, because you are taught well and want to succeed, you make good progress. You and your parents and carers told us behaviour is good in and around school and we agree. You clearly care very much for each other. We noted how well you all get on, and how much you trust the adults in your school to help you should you have any problems.

Those responsible for leading and managing your school do a good job. They regularly check how well you are learning, and help your teachers to help you. However, we did find some things the school could do even better so that you can reach even higher standards, so we have asked them to:

- improve your writing by encouraging you to write at length more often, and by helping you to realise how important it is to remember your writing targets at all times
- increase your progress in mathematics right from nursery by helping you to calculate better, use your mathematical skills more, and, for those of you who can do more challenging work, getting you to do it sooner in lessons.

You all can help by remembering your writing targets at all times, taking more responsibility for your own work, and continuing to work as hard as you do now. We hope you will always enjoy learning, and we wish you well.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Lead inspector

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