

St Paul's

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

St Paul's gained independent school status in April 2007 and is registered for 60 students aged between 11 and 16 years. It offers a fresh start to students who have previously been excluded from, or not been successful in, mainstream education. The school is part of The St Paul's Trust and works within the Trust's ethos and values. The Trust has a children's centre, a nursery provider and out-of-school provision on site, with a further pre-school and other nursery providers in the locality as part of its wider work. These are all separately inspected and individual reports are available. The school was last inspected in June 2008.

Placements are on a needs basis and therefore students may be admitted to the school at any time during the academic year. A maximum of 50 students each year are funded by a local authority grant. There are currently 49 students on roll. Many are from the locality of Balsall Heath, where the school is situated, and some from a wider Birmingham catchment area. Of these, 44 students have a statement of special educational needs and six are looked after children. The school is founded on the belief that all students can achieve educational success, self-confidence and improved emotional intelligence.

Evaluation of the school

St Paul's continues to provide a good quality of education for its students. It is successful in achieving its aim to help local people conquer barriers to education and to create opportunities for individuals to grow. The school makes an outstanding contribution to students' welfare, health and safety. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at least good and students' behaviour, despite some occasional challenges, is well managed and is good overall. The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust. Students are happy to be at school and feel well cared for and supported, which is also endorsed by parents and carers. All regulatory requirements are met.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. Its variety meets each student's individual needs and interests, providing academic, vocational and practical options. There is an individualised alternative curriculum to support students with their personal

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

development, behaviour and self-esteem. There is a strong emphasis on the core skills of literacy, numeracy, scientific enquiry and information and communication technology. This is balanced effectively alongside subjects such as physical education, art and food technology. There is no curricular provision for music. For students with very low literacy skills, there is a directed programme of phonics (the sounds that letters make), spelling and reading. Many programmes have been carefully evaluated and adapted since the last inspection. For example, the science scheme of work now offers many more practical activities and has increased students' enjoyment as a consequence. Staff have begun to think about suitable curriculum links across other subject areas than their own, and the curriculum successfully integrates some opportunities to reinforce reading and writing, and using and applying mathematics in a wider range of subjects. However, this is not happening consistently across the school. There is a wide range of activities outside of the school which successfully enriches the curriculum and engages students' interest. For example, students regularly visit the Trust pond and array of small animals close by. The curriculum is sufficiently flexible to help students who have pressing barriers to learning to overcome them so that they are more receptive. The education fulfils the requirements of all students with a statement of special educational needs. It also prepares them effectively for the responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Teaching and assessment are good. The staff team are stable and are committed to the ethos of the school. They all have strong professional relationships with the students and know them well. Ratios of adults to students are high, enabling each student to benefit from good levels of individual attention. Staff are also tutors assigned to mixed-aged family groups who meet daily, which makes an important contribution to students' development. The best lessons are those in which the students remain engaged for the whole lesson because of effective planning and teaching. They are also typified by good subject knowledge and challenging expectations, with progress in the lesson itself matched back to the clearly identified success criteria. Currently, there is no specialist for mathematics in school and therefore no effective monitoring of this area to ensure that it is taught sufficiently well.

Several staff have additional roles and responsibilities which are critical to students and their progress. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that each student has an initial assessment shortly after joining; has the correct programme for their needs; and liaises with staff to ensure that students' next steps, as required by their statements of special educational need, are clear. Students' progress towards their targets is also monitored carefully to ensure they are all progressing sufficiently well, which they are. Similarly, there is also an appointed looked-after children co-ordinator, who builds up strong relationships with students who are looked after, their carers and any other related professionals. As a result of this diligence, all of this group of students have reached their targets in the last two academic years.

Students make good progress. Assessment is regularly undertaken and reasonably thorough for each individual. There is no set pattern to students' progress. Some students are making steady progress over time and some students make significant progress over short periods of time compared to their mostly very low starting

points. Progress in lessons is often indicative of the quality of teaching in the lesson, but students' progress also tends to dip and fall according to their current emotional needs. However, the school's success in building students' resilience and behaviours has a positive impact on each student developing a more uniform rate of progress over time. Staff use information from the data to ensure they are adapting their lessons well, although there is currently only analysis of individual students rather than evaluating as a whole school, which would serve to better identify whole-school issues. In the last academic year, some students have made rapid progress in their reading. All of the Year 11 students, without exception and including those with literacy identified as a learning difficulty on their statement, left the school with some form of qualification in literacy or English. Most Year 11 students made the progress required of them in mathematics, and similarly a very large majority of students achieved a pass in Functional Skills in mathematics. Students confirm that their progress in literacy is more evident than their progress in mathematics, which they find more challenging. All students make good and often outstanding progress in their personal development during their time at the school, which is confirmed by students and their parents and carers.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have regular opportunities to discuss their feelings and opinions in daily family group time and during lessons. Students have a good awareness of public services and institutions. They are developing positive links with a range of professionals, including community police officers.

The school is welcoming to all. The school community is based on honesty, trust and mutual respect. Consequently, students are taught to respect themselves, each other and the adults in school, whom they have learned to trust. One student said: 'This school is almost flawless and changes the lives of anyone who enrolls here. I am very happy with the progress I have made, which I could not have achieved if the teachers did not put in as much effort and care as they do.' All students strive to work harmoniously alongside others and be mutually supportive, knowing that bullying will not be tolerated and taking increasing personal responsibility for their actions and words. Through the school's strong moral framework, and the wide mix of people in both student and staff groupings, tolerance of different beliefs and cultures is promoted. This is also supported through the curriculum, and by utilising the immediate community and the school's proximity to Birmingham city with its very diverse population.

Students' behaviour is good. Expectations, including those for students' behaviour, are made clear and students understand them. Behaviour is very well managed, with a consistently applied sanctions and rewards policy. The school incident log shows that periods of disruption are becoming less frequent over time and that often students behave consistently well, as they demonstrated during the inspection when they were excellent ambassadors for themselves and the school. Any aggression is

swiftly dealt with and discussed. Adults guide students to make the right choices and serve as good role models.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for students' welfare, health and safety. All required policies and procedures are in place and up to date. Staff are trained to appropriate levels in child protection procedures and senior staff have undertaken training in safer recruitment. Thorough and regular assessments ensure that staff identify and address any areas of risk. Fire safety is given a high priority. Students' attendance levels are variable according to individual circumstances. For the majority of students, attendance is good and for all it is improved on their previous experiences in education. The school works very hard indeed on punctuality, which some students continue to struggle with. There have been recent improvements to procedures for when a student is late or absent. There are relatively few unauthorised absences because most students genuinely want to attend. Fixed-term exclusions are a rarity as there is an effective system of internal exclusion which deals with incidents and prevents situations escalating. Students believe the system of sanctions is fair.

Students understand the importance of looking after themselves and the contribution that physical exercise and eating healthily makes to this. Parents, carers and students believe that the packed lunches provided by outside caterers are not sufficiently healthy. Students have many varied opportunities to be physically active, including sports on and off the premises and participation in a wide range of outdoor pursuits. There is rigorous record keeping for monitoring students' welfare, health and safety and these systems work effectively. There is a suitable policy for first aid. Staff training for emergency medical treatment and for protecting children, including looked after children, is up to date. Suitable records are kept for accidents and incidents and analysis of data this academic year ensures that both are kept at an acceptable level. The school adequately fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has appropriate procedures in place for the recruitment of staff and these are followed systematically. There is a single central register in place which shows that all the necessary checks have been made on the proprietors, staff and volunteers.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school has mainly suitable teaching areas, including specialist teaching facilities for science, information technology, food technology and the arts. However, the room for science and one of the art rooms have restricted space available for practical work. There is sufficient indoor and outdoor space for physical education and recreation. The premises and accommodation are secure and the multiplicity of community users on site does not compromise students' safety. The internal

decoration has been improved since the last inspection and the school building is well maintained by the Trust's maintenance team.

Provision of information

The school provides, or makes available, all of the required information to parents, carers and others. Information is clear, accurate and up to date. The school has established close links with parents and carers, the funding body and a wide range of external partners. It also has good links with other providers, including in the voluntary sector and workplace. All but a very small number of parents and carers believed they are kept well informed about their children's academic and personal progress. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the contribution the school makes to their child's personal and academic development.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clear complaints procedure which meets requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Raise opportunities for extending students' writing skills across all curriculum areas and with a consistent approach across the school.
- Develop expertise in, and the programme for, mathematics to raise achievement and progress in this area further.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Secondary		
Date school opened	April 2007		
Age range of pupils	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 42	Girls: 7	Total: 49
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 39	Girls: 6	Total: 45
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 2	Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils)	Funded in full by local authority grant		
Address of school	Hertford Street Balsall Heath Birmingham B12 8NJ		
Telephone number	0121 464 4376		
Email address	julie.eaton@stpaulstrust.org.uk		
Headteacher	Julie Eaton		
Proprietor	St Paul's Community Development Trust		

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.



9 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of St Paul's, Birmingham, B12 8NJ

Firstly, may I thank you for being so helpful to me during my visit and for being such good school representatives. I was very pleased to hear about how settled and happy you have been since coming to St Pauls. You told me that you can see improvements in your own attendance, behaviour and confidence, as well as in your educational progress. It was pleasing to hear of your enthusiasm for certain subjects and your special love of art, physical education and cooking. I recognise that some of you are not still attending as well as you should, and that some of you are not very good at getting here on time. This is important so that you do not miss lessons, or parts of lessons, as it does hinder the progress you are making.

St Paul's is a good school with a dedicated staff team who really care about you all as individuals. Everyone makes an exceptionally good contribution to your welfare, health and safety. Your tutors and support staff try and make your lessons enjoyable and ensure that you are well equipped for the next stage of your education or for working life. The school meets all government requirements. It is keen to continue improving and so I have recommended to the proprietor and staff that the school:

- gives more opportunities for you to practise writing, not just in English but in all areas of the curriculum, and making sure all tutors have the same high expectations for your writing
- develops staff knowledge in planning and teaching mathematics to help raise your achievement and progress in this area further.

Well done to all of you and I hope you continue to attend well, work hard and have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector