

St Paul's CofE (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124245
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359614
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Gibbins
Headteacher	Irene Kirby
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 10 lessons and saw seven teachers. A detailed scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics and in writing was carried out. Inspectors held discussions with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and a very few parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents, including policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils, self-evaluation records and assessment information. The inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from 68 parents and carers, 44 pupils and 8 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors explored the quality of pupils' progress in mathematics, especially in Year 3 and Year 4.
- They considered how well more-able pupils were supported and challenged to do their best.
- They evaluated both the quality of assessment opportunities provided by teachers and the use pupils make of them to support their learning.

Information about the school

St Paul's is smaller than most schools. A very large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two part-time Nursery classes and two Reception classes. Other pupils are taught mainly in single-age classes, but Year 3 pupils are currently taught in a mixed-age class with a few Year 2 pupils.

The school has Healthy Schools status.

A Before- and After-School club operates on the school site. This is privately managed and subject to a separate inspection.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Paul's is a satisfactory school. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in Nursery. These promising beginnings are not built on to best effect in Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2. Attainment in Year 4 dropped from above average in 2008 to below average in 2010. This was accompanied by a corresponding decline in the rates of pupils' progress by the end of Year 4. Inspection evidence indicates that in the current Year 4, the drop in attainment has largely been reversed in mathematics, but there is now some margin to catch up in writing. Low attendance also puts a brake on attainment and the rate of progress for some pupils. Overall, outcomes for pupils are satisfactory and this means St Paul's prepares pupils satisfactorily for the next stages of their lives.

Most pupils enjoy school and there are evident strengths in their personal development. Pupils know how to keep healthy and have a good awareness of how to stay safe. They behave well, make full use of the attractive, and varied outside facilities to play harmoniously with each other. On some occasions, pupils make thoughtful, constructive oral contributions to lessons. Within otherwise satisfactory teaching there are some weaknesses with regard to the quality of planning and pace of lessons. Assessment is not used sharply enough by teachers to check on pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. Opportunities are missed in marking to support pupils in improving their work. The curriculum meets essential requirements but the school's initiatives to endow it with more creativity and vitality, for example through the wider use of information and communication technology (ICT), are at an early stage.

The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Development has been hampered in the last year because of significant discontinuity in staffing at senior level. When this factor is set to one side, some aspects of the school's customary self-evaluation processes lack rigour in checking on the impact of actions taken to ensure pupils can achieve well, rather than satisfactorily. These weaknesses are also reflected in some aspects of the effectiveness of the school's partnerships with parents and carers and in its efforts to address the recent decline in attendance. Pupils' progress is adequately tracked, but insufficient use is made of this information to set precise, challenging targets for pupils and teachers to aspire to.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement by:

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- ensuring greater creativity in lesson planning which is fully adapted to meet the needs of all groups of pupils
- ensuring that lessons move at a brisk pace
- ensuring teachers make better use of assessment opportunities to guide and extend pupils in their learning
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the actions leaders take to develop provision are reviewed more sharply in relation to their impact on pupils' attainment and progress
 - making more purposeful use of assessment data to set challenging targets for pupils to raise their expectations and enhance accountability for teachers
- Raise attendance to meet the local authority target of 95% by December 2012 by:
 - improving the effectiveness of the school's actions to promote attendance
 - taking robust action to strengthen the school's engagement with parents and carers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their attainment when they join Year 1 is a little above average and this is maintained until the end of Year 2. Occasionally, pupils demonstrate good speaking skills, as for example in a Year 2 lesson based on tongue-twisters. Currently, the attainment of pupils in Year 4 is slightly above average in reading and average in mathematics and writing. Pupils' independent learning skills are variable. A few more-able pupils are able to think creatively and apply their knowledge to make interesting points in class. On other occasions, progress for more-able pupils is restricted when tasks do not offer sufficient variety or possibilities for extending their learning. The slow pace, impacts on the quantity of work pupils, including those in Year 3 and Year 4, produce in lessons and reduces opportunities for them to apply their mathematical skills in a range of practical situations. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities working with less-able pupils make satisfactory progress, for example while using partitioning methods to work out more difficult calculations.

A large majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils enjoy their opportunities for physical exercise and choose to eat healthily as reflected in the school's award. They are polite and friendly to each other and welcoming to visitors. Pupils who have positions of responsibility make effective contributions to school life, for example, as school councillors, play leaders and eco-warriors. Pupils are active in the local community, supporting village initiatives and in entertaining elderly citizens through choir performances. Attendance rates are affected by the significant number of pupils who miss school owing to them taking term-time holidays. Overall, pupils' workplace skills are satisfactory due to their average attainment in literacy and numeracy.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has some strengths. Teachers manage and encourage pupils well and listen carefully to their answers. They usually make effective links with prior learning and learning objectives are clear. While pupils are provided with success criteria to assess their learning, neither these nor the learning activities are adapted sufficiently to meet the needs of all groups. Activities are sometimes over-reliant on worksheets and ICT is not yet embedded effectively enough as a stimulus to learning. Consequently, the pace of lessons is often slow and pupils' attention sometimes wanders. Insufficient use is made of assessment opportunities in lessons to check and extend pupils' learning and marking is inconsistent in quality and format. These factors prevent pupils from being more actively involved in taking responsibility for their learning.

The curriculum is adequately matched to pupils' needs. It provides pupils with a good grounding in healthy lifestyles and a clear understanding of safety issues. Other elements, such as the Year 4 residential trip, motivate pupils. Good use is made of visits and visiting specialists, for example in physical education and music, but the amount and variety of extra-curricular activities is moderate. While partnership activities provide some opportunities for able and gifted pupils in mathematics, outlets in school for developing their mathematical skills in other subjects are limited. The school's plans to inject greater creativity into the curriculum and develop the use of ICT are at an early stage.

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Staff are appropriately trained in first-aid procedures and look after pupils capably at break-times. The school provides a welcoming environment for newcomers, including pupils who have experienced troubled times at their previous schools. Pupils 'at-risk' are satisfactorily supported as they move through the year-groups. The school works closely with its partner schools to tackle common concerns regarding attendance, but measures taken have had limited impact on improving attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Two senior leaders have been absent for prolonged periods of time in the last year due to injury and ill-health and this has constrained the school's capacity to embed some planned improvements to provision. Members of the governing body have managed this unsettling situation well and staff have willingly taken on new and unfamiliar roles of responsibility to keep the school running smoothly. Not all actions taken are followed up rigorously to gauge their impact on outcomes, which slows the pace of development. Pupils' progress is adequately tracked but insufficient emphasis is placed on setting ambitious targets for pupils to enable them to capitalise fully on the good outcomes children achieve by the end of Reception. Leaders have started to consult parents and carers on matters of provision and recognise there is still considerable scope for developing more productive links with them. Governance is satisfactory and members of the governing body contribute very effectively to the school's good arrangements for safeguarding. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, but its work is more developed in the local area than further afield. The school promotes equalities satisfactorily, as reflected in satisfactory outcomes for all groups of pupils.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and knowledge when they join Nursery are average. They make good progress in all areas of learning so that by the end of Reception several children are working beyond the levels expected for their age. Children are happy and engage well with the activities provided. They share well, respect and follow up each other's ideas. They are motivated and curious learners, sometimes persevering for sustained periods, for example, when seeking out shapes in the sand. They use resources sensibly, play safely and behave well. Classrooms are well organised and resourced to stimulate children's imagination and staff make expert use of the newly developed outdoor area to extend opportunities for children's learning. There is a good balance of play-based and adult-led activities centred round children's interests. On a few occasions Reception children are a little passive when kept on the carpet for too long. Nursery children, in particular, benefit from their teachers' sharply focused, probing questioning which stretches them and extends their speaking skills. The interim leader has quickly adapted to her new responsibilities, demonstrating verve, enthusiasm and developing skills, not least in managing new staff and recent changes to provision in Reception. Assessment arrangements are comprehensive and children's development is tracked well. Teamwork is good and there is a clear vision and impetus for improvement. Transition arrangements within this stage are good and productive relationships have been established with parents and carers to support children's learning.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was average. The statistical responses, as reflected in the table below, indicate that most parents and carers have a positive view of the school's effectiveness. About thirty written comments were received. Many of these expressed concerns regarding various aspects of the school's partnership with parents and carers. Inspectors found that these concerns were largely justified, but noted that the school has recently sought to gain a fuller picture of the views of parents and carers through its 'in-house' survey.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Paul's CofE First School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection received 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	65	22	32	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	54	28	41	2	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	28	44	65	5	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	26	44	65	4	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	20	29	43	63	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	34	38	56	7	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	43	37	54	1	1	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	38	38	56	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	38	33	49	5	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	26	33	49	10	15	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	24	39	57	7	10	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	17	25	38	56	4	6	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	47	32	47	2	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's CofE (C) First School Wolverhampton WV9 5AD

I would like to thank you for your help when the inspection team visited your school recently. This is what we found. Yours is a satisfactory school and there are some good things about it.

Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.

You behave well and are polite to each other and to visitors.

You practise healthy life-styles well and know what to do to keep yourselves and each other safe.

When you leave school at the end of Year 4 your attainment in English and mathematics average, but your progress in reading is a little better than in writing and mathematics. Overall, your progress is satisfactory. To raise your attainment and help you learn better, there are some things we have asked the staff to do.

Make sure that your lessons move at a faster pace.

Give you better chances in lessons, and when they mark your work, to think closely about how well you are learning and what you need to do next.

Plan your lessons more creatively and match activities more carefully to suit the needs of everyone.

Make better use of the records they keep on your progress to set challenging targets for you to reach by the end of Year 4.

Make sure that the actions they take are carefully checked to judge whether these are helping you to improve your work.

Improve the actions they take to boost the attendance of some pupils and work more closely with your families to reach the school's attendance target.

You can help by attending school every day.

Yours sincerely

Derek Aitken

Lead inspector

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