

St Paul's CofE Primary School

Victoria Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 7JU

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- St Paul's is a rapidly improving school. The headteacher and governing body wasted no time in driving the improvements required when the school went into special measures and have transformed all aspects of the school's work.
- Pupils now achieve well from their often well-below average starting points on entry into school. They make good and sometimes excellent progress in lessons because teaching is usually good; some is outstanding.
- From being well-below average in 2010, Year 6 pupils' test results in English and mathematics are now average. A greater number are now achieving higher levels.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils say they enjoy school, feel very safe and are eager to learn.
- Teachers use what they know about pupils' different levels of ability to plan interesting activities that help all pupils move on quickly in their lessons. Such actions make sure that pupils from minority ethnic communities and those entitled to the pupil premium funding or with a disability or special educational needs make progress equally as good as others'.
- The Nursery and Reception class unit has been transformed and is outstanding. Improvements in leadership, teaching and an array of exciting activities ensure children achieve well and enjoy their time here.
- Parents speak very positively about the school, valuing the improvements made and the welcoming, caring and supportive atmosphere they feel when they enter.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not of a consistently high quality required to bring about outstanding achievement for all. Occasionally, it does not challenge higher-ability pupils well enough.
- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly, but do not always check how well pupils present their work. It is sometimes untidy.
- Afternoon topic work is helping pupils enjoy different subjects in a more practical way. However, teachers do not always vary tasks for pupils of differing abilities as successfully in topic lessons as they do for English and mathematics lessons.

Information about this inspection

- When St Paul's was inspected in October 2011, it was judged to require special measures. Since then, the school has been inspected on two occasions. This is the third inspection.
- Two inspectors were present for the first day and one for the second. They observed 15 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks and heard a number of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff and teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local headteacher who has provided additional support to the school, and a school improvement adviser from Newcastle-upon-Tyne local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils at lunch time on the first day of inspection and to many pupils in lessons, at break and lunch times.
- They looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on how well pupils are doing in their lessons and tests, the plans and reviews of the plans developed to improve the school, and minutes of governing body meetings. They also checked records relating to behaviour and attendance and policies the school has developed to keep pupils safe.
- The inspectors took account of the school's recent parent survey and four responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. They also talked to a number of parents bringing their children into school at the beginning of both inspection days.

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anthony Kingston

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is likely to be of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- St Paul's is an average-sized primary school.
- Half of the pupils are eligible for extra government funding called the pupil premium (funding is available for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in local authority care and those whose parents are in the armed forces). This is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is also well-above average.
- The school has identified a larger-than-average proportion of pupils who have a disability or special educational needs, who are given extra support from staff through 'school action'.
- A slightly lower-than-average proportion of pupils with a disability or special educational needs has a statement of special educational needs, or is supported through 'school action plus'.
- The school exceeds the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise pupils' attainment further by ensuring that:
 - activities in lessons always stretch the more able
 - activities in topic work are matched more consistently to the different abilities of pupils in the class, in line with the way teachers already do this in English and mathematics
 - teachers check pupils' presentation of their work more regularly when they are marking books and challenge pupils to keep their work tidy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- High-quality learning journals in the Nursery and Reception classes record children's good achievements and showcase the exciting things they do indoors and outside. For example, children thoroughly enjoyed making contraptions to fly their birds in the outdoor zoo they had designed. Inside, they worked enthusiastically in the bakery that they built from scratch.
- Such experiences help to prepare children successfully for Key Stage 1 and are beginning to make a positive difference to how pupils are doing in Year 1. Recent tests results on their understanding of the sounds that letters make are similar to those found in other schools.
- There has been year-on-year improvement in pupils' achievements in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. This is because teachers are making sure lessons are interesting and moving pupils on more quickly in their learning. Senior staff know there is still some way to go to narrow the gap completely between Key Stage 1 results in school and in schools nationally, but the gap is narrowing steadily due to the actions taken.
- Better teaching last year led to a rapid improvement in pupils' skills in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. In summer 2012, all groups of pupils in Year 6 caught up after previous poor progress because of the good teaching they received during the year. The headteacher and senior staff know that pupils' test results need to be even better and are working hard with staff so that pupils' achievements become as good as the best in the country.
- Lesson observations and pupils' work books show that pupils across the school are making good and sometimes very good progress in lessons. This is because teaching has improved in every class and senior staff make sure now that no pupil falls behind with their work.
- The previous gap between how well pupils entitled to the pupil premium do and other pupils has virtually gone. This is because the headteacher and the governing body have used the funding to provide extra staff to help pupils learn in smaller groups, so that they can catch up if need be. Pupils from minority ethnic communities often make better progress than similar pupils in other schools because of the well-planned way their work is set.
- Pupils have regular, well-planned opportunities to read in groups, to adults and silently to themselves and, as a result, their skills are developing well. Pupils in Year 2 discussed their books enthusiastically, describing what had happened and predicting what may happen next. They read confidently and expressively, breaking down words that were difficult into sounds they have learned and then building them up again to make sense.

The quality of teaching is good

- The headteacher's unwavering focus on improving teaching has reaped rewards. It is one of the key reasons why pupils are making better progress now in class. The other is the much-improved, regular way that teachers check how pupils are doing.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors have noticed the improvements and say how much they enjoy lessons. They speak enthusiastically about the useful targets that teachers give them in all subjects and how they help them to know how well they are doing and what to do next.
- Pupils' attitudes in lessons are first class because teachers strive to make sure activities are interesting and fun. It was delightful to see pupils researching eagerly the habitats of animals in a science lesson and hearing one report that the 'teacher brings the subject to life'. It was also exciting to watch older pupils thoroughly enjoying a ballet workshop given by dance professionals.
- Teachers, usually, use additional adults in class well to provide small group work, so there is always someone close at hand to check what pupils are learning, to help them when they get stuck and to challenge them when they need it.
- Teachers are keen to continue to improve their teaching skills because they want all teaching to

be as good as the best, so that pupils make outstanding rather than good progress in lessons.

- All teachers plan English and mathematics lessons very carefully, using the information they have about pupils' current levels of ability to provide interesting activities that pupils can do and then move quickly on to their next targets.
- Occasionally, information is not used well enough to make sure that work challenges the more-able pupils. For example, activities in topic work are sometimes the same for everyone, so the more-able pupils complete work that is too easy.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, providing very detailed feedback on what pupils are doing well and what they need to improve to reach their next level. Pupils say the 'green for go' and 'pink for think' comments in the books are very helpful. Parents think so also and are glad that homework is now more regular. Although pupils work hard in lessons, sometimes, teachers do not make sure their writing is neat and this means work is sometimes untidy.
- A wide range of interesting visitors to school and visits out of school add to pupils' enjoyment of lessons, their successes in class and their good social, spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils' inspiring art work following their recent boat trip along the River Tyne was a joy to see. They are clearly proud of their city and spoke enthusiastically about what they learned.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well; they are polite, friendly and helpful to each other, to adults and to visitors. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and teachers are good role models for pupils in learning about respect, tolerance and care.
- Pupils from many different backgrounds mix well and learn to understand and value their different traditions, cultures and views. Opportunities to do so, and pupils' good personal qualities, contribute well to the strong sense of spiritual, social and moral purpose that fills each day.
- All parents who spoke to inspectors and those who completed the inspection survey report that their children enjoy school, are very safe and well cared for. Pupils echo these positive views, saying behaviour is getting better because teachers are making lessons more interesting.
- Pupils say improvements in the rewards and sanctions system are helping to improve behaviour because pupils love the weekly celebrations of their achievements. This is evident in the vastly reducing numbers of pupils who are given a few minutes lunch time detention as a sanction and the very few pupils excluded for short periods.
- Pupils report they are taught well about risks to their safety and different types of bullying. They are adamant that incidents of bullying are very rare and speak very confidently that any episode would be sorted out quickly. On one occasion, a pupil made a hurtful comment to someone from another country. Records show the incident was tackled firmly.
- At the time of the inspection in October 2011, pupils' attendance was below average; it is now slightly above average. This is a huge achievement. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school because lessons are such fun and because their good attendance is celebrated in assemblies.
- Innovative actions, such as breakfast sessions where parents meet with staff on issues important to their children's schooling and where the headteacher and attendance officers give strong messages about the importance of good attendance, are also helping to reduce absences.

The leadership and management are good

- Teachers confirm that the headteacher has transformed the school to tackle past weaknesses and, together with the governing body and senior team, has spurred staff on successfully in the quest to be a good and then outstanding school.
- The headteacher's and governing body's single-minded drive for improvement has eradicated weaknesses quickly and secured the good progress pupils are making in lessons. The headteacher and governing body have made sure all pupils from every background have had

equal opportunity to succeed from their often very low starting points.

- Teachers have received good training from the local authority and leaders from a local school and have enjoyed sharing the good practice in school. As a result, teaching is improving all the time and poor-quality teaching has been stamped out. Teachers say they are inspired to continue to challenge their own teaching to improve it further and say they appreciate their increased responsibilities and involvement in driving the school's improvement.
- Stronger actions than previously have been taken by the headteacher and the governing body over the past year to tackle teachers whose lessons are not good enough. This includes the development of specific and time-limited support to help the teachers teach more successfully and the decision not to increase teachers' pay until teaching is always good and their pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher and senior staff have developed good processes for checking how well actions they are taking to raise standards are working. They track pupils' achievements in lessons and check pupils' targets regularly to see if the pupils are meeting them. If the pupils are not, then the headteacher makes sure teachers take action to help pupils catch up to where they should be.
- Senior staff observe teachers' lessons regularly and look at pupils' books and talk to pupils to make sure lessons are helping them to learn well. Senior staff give action points to teachers if some things need to be better and go back and check when they next watch the teacher. All of these things are written into action plans that the senior staff and the governing body check often.
- The curriculum is good and has been changed to focus on raising pupils' achievements in English and mathematics and to inspire pupils to want to learn through interesting topics that appeal to boys and girls. The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception class is very good. It is being adapted constantly to meet children's interests and to ensure it is rich, exciting and enjoyable.
- Vibrant displays around school showcase the good aspects of the curriculum and encourage pupils' interest in learning, literacy, numeracy and the arts. Pupils talk enthusiastically about memorable moments in the curriculum and the good range of after-school activities enriches it. They would like more equipment to play with at break times and plans are in place to tackle this.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Despite their disappointment with the previous judgement of special measures, the governing body wasted no time to put actions in place to ensure the school was removed from special measures within a challenging 12-month timescale. They have been successful in that endeavour. Well led by the Chair of the Governing Body, governors recognised quickly that they needed to improve the way they checked what senior leaders and staff were doing to raise standards and have done precisely that. They ensure safeguarding procedures meet requirements and have very sound financial management systems in place to make the best of their resources. The governing body is fully involved in the school's self-evaluation of its work and, as a result, has a very clear understanding of what is working well and what should be better. Governors go into school to check how things are going and get information about pupils' learning and teachers' performance regularly. They use such information to check whether actions put in place are improving things and to challenge senior staff when concerns emerge. Governors check the progress of all pupils and groups of pupils to make sure none is falling behind. They have been particularly careful to make sure the extra pupil premium money is making a difference to the achievements of pupils receiving it. For example, they check regularly whether the extra staff working with small groups are making a difference, through detailed information they demand about pupils' progress in those sessions. The staffing committee makes sure now that teachers' performance and pay is linked to the expected teachers' standards and the way teachers are improving pupils' achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	108502
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	388561

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Curry
Headteacher	Judith Sword
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2011
Telephone number	0191 2733667
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