

St Paul's Primary School

The Oaks, Chippenham, SN15 1DU

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher successfully secure the commitment of the whole staff to school improvement, including teaching and pupils' achievement, and provide strong guidance and support.
- There is a steady rise in pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection.
- Pupils know what they must do to succeed because teachers explain clearly what pupils must learn, why they are doing the work, and how they can succeed.
- Pupils take pride in their work, most write neatly and try hard to succeed in lessons. They are often engrossed in their work.
- Pupils feel safe and behave well. They are very sensible and polite as they move around school, and work together well in lessons.
- Teachers plan topics to capture pupils' imagination and interest so that pupils have a lot of fun and want to come to school.
- Pupils' attendance is exceptionally high.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some of the lower attaining pupils do not make as good progress as their peers in learning to read and write in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.
- The governing body relies heavily on the good quality information provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and does not have robust systems for holding school leaders to account.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, of which 13 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons, often in partnership with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils from each of the nine classes, three governors, and school staff including senior leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and spoke to some parents before school.
- They observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Liz Kounnou, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rodney Braithwaite

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is about the same size as the average-sized primary school.
- More pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium than average.
- Less than 10% of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritage.
- Less than 5% of the pupils are learning English as an additional language, this is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs supported through school action plus, or with a statement, is similar to the national average. The majority of this group has speech, language and communication needs; other needs are behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and specific or moderate learning difficulties.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in reading and writing for the lowest attaining pupils, especially those in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 by:
 - ensuring that pupils understand how to use phonic skills to help them work out unfamiliar words as they read and write
 - providing more opportunities for children to develop their language skills in the Reception class and making sure these are tailored sharply to match children's needs
 - ensuring that pupils know precisely how to improve their reading skills, and this information is shared with their parents.
- Improve governance by ensuring that governors:
 - ask robust questions of senior leaders about progress towards the school improvement priorities
 - gain a clearer understanding of how well the school is doing in comparison to similar schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved year on year since the last inspection. The great majority of children start school with levels of attainment that are below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication and language skills. Pupils make good progress in most subjects of the curriculum.
- Some of the lower attaining pupils struggle to make good progress in reading and writing because they do not have a thorough understanding of the way that letters and sounds are linked (phonic skills). This means they have few strategies to work out unfamiliar words when they are reading, and find it difficult to spell words correctly when they are writing, particularly in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Several older pupils find spelling difficult to master because they do not have a good grounding in understanding phonic skills.
- Children in Reception make slower progress in developing their reading and writing skills because many of the activities that are planned to help them learn are not precise enough to ensure they make rapid progress. Children do well in improving their speaking and listening skills as a result of the many opportunities they have to talk about their activities with each other and with an adult.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium make good progress. Specific specialist support to increase their reading and number skills is very effective and increases their confidence. Those with special educational needs do well because support for them in most lessons is well thought out and matched to their needs.
- The small group of pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language do well. The very clear structure of lessons, which include many opportunities to talk with partners, helps them rapidly gain a working knowledge of English and provides them with confidence to take a full part in lessons.
- Pupils know how to set out their writing effectively and how to choose words that will bring their work to life. They are highly motivated to write because they are interested in the topics. Pupils' progress in learning to write is particularly strong in Key Stage 2.
- Clear explanations and plenty of opportunities to talk about mathematical ideas are helping pupils to gain a thorough understanding of how numbers work. Progress in mathematics is good because pupils understand why they are trying to solve number problems. They thoroughly enjoy the mental mathematics activities they must complete to secure a Maths Passport, and are rapidly gaining fast recall of basic facts, such as doubles and halves of numbers, to help them in their calculations.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers make sure that pupils know what they are going to learn, why they are going to learn it, and how they can succeed in almost all lessons. Pupils know they can expect these three things to be shared at the start of all lessons; they especially value the information that explains how they can succeed. This enables pupils to understand that they can make a difference to their own learning.
- This is not always the case when reading is taught. Pupils have limited understanding of how to improve their reading skills and this slows progress, especially for the least able pupils. In Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, the teaching of phonic skills is not sufficiently precise and slows the pace of learning. Guided reading sessions for pupils in Key Stage 2 run smoothly but sometimes lack sufficient guidance to ensure that lower attaining pupils increase their skills when they are working independently.
- Teachers use assessment information well to plan lessons that are pitched at the right level to help pupils move on in their learning. In Key Stage 2, pupils often have learning ladders to stick into their books that act as a checklist for them to judge whether or not they have completed

everything as they should. On occasions, pupils check each other's work using the lists and this really helps them to see how they can improve their own work.

- Teachers' planning for lessons is constructed carefully and often with a great deal of thought so that lessons provide work at the right levels for pupils of differing abilities. In a few lessons this is not fully precise so that lower attaining pupils sometimes need a lot of support to complete the tasks. Activities provided for pupils who have special educational needs often include attractive resources to inspire them to do their best.
- Marking of pupils' books is thorough and often provides helpful comments for pupils so they know how to improve. Pupils find the feedback valuable, books often include notes that pupils write to teachers in response to the marking.
- Writing is taught particularly well, pupils are motivated to do their best and have a thorough understanding of what they must do in lessons. As a result, they write confidently in a range of styles. Big Write sessions occasionally provide a magical atmosphere of calm and concentration, backed by explicit guidance from teachers on how to do your best. Consequently, pupils try really hard to do well and remember all the key features for each writing style. Pupils' presentation is neat and shows the pride pupils have in their own achievements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Many lessons have plenty of opportunities for pupils to be actively involved. Teachers regularly ask pupils to talk to a partner and share ideas and they have plenty to do in lessons. This, combined with the really high levels of motivation that stem from pupils' enjoyment of the topics, means that attitudes to learning are very good. You can almost hear how hard pupils are trying in some lessons, such as in Year 6 when pupils were constructing a biography of Bob Marley.
- Pupils are polite to one another and to adults; when one boy was praised in class for the work he had completed the day before, he grinned from ear to ear and turned to the teaching assistant to thank her for her help. On the playground pupils are sociable, sensible and very active; they take charge of the equipment with great importance.
- Pupils have a good understanding of all forms of bullying. The school ensures that all pupils, including those in Key Stage 1, fully understand the dangers of cyber bullying, and e-safety. Pupils report there is little bullying, and none that is serious, but are very clear what they must do to prevent any occurring.
- Pupils are a little concerned about the inappropriate behaviour of a very small minority of pupils both in lessons and outside. They are confident that staff deal with any misbehaviour promptly so that they always feel safe at school. All the parent responses confirmed their children feel safe. All safeguarding requirements are met.
- Teachers manage behaviour effectively in almost all classes and they use prompt and calm language to create a hard-working atmosphere. Pupils are proud of the house points they gain and the Good Work Awards they receive. Prompt action is taken when insufficient effort is put into lessons, this is recorded by the headteacher and arrangements made to 'try your best' later in the day.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong partnership between the headteacher and the able deputy headteacher is the driving force behind the substantial improvements that have been secured at the school since the last inspection. They focus consistently on improving teaching and ensure that staff use assessment information to inform their teaching effectively. Both teach lessons for others to observe so that teachers develop a greater understanding of how to raise expectations and achievement.

- Performance management effectively ensures that whole school priorities are implemented. One example is that staff now regularly explain at the start of each lesson 'What', 'Why' and 'How' in relation to learning. This has transformed pupils' attitudes to learning right across the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is promoted well through the lively curriculum and enjoyable extra activities. Topics must include a Bang, a Buzz, and a Bash, to hook pupils' interest, keep pupils motivated and ensure they make good progress in all the subjects of the curriculum.
- The school is well placed to make further improvements because there is a wealth of information about how well new initiatives are bedding in, and what impact these are having for pupils. Leaders at all levels carry out effective checks and provide clear feedback for staff to ensure that pupils make the progress expected of them in this school. Expectations are high.
- There are similarly high expectations for all staff to implement the school behaviour policy consistently; as a result, very few lessons are disrupted. Pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour respond well so that there are very few exclusions and these reduce rapidly for individuals involved. This is due to the strong approach to ensuring that all pupils have an equal chance to do well at school. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and staff work actively to ensure that any pupil with different needs is helped to do their best.
- Good relationships are fostered within the whole school community. The Christmas Bazaar, that took place during the inspection, is a fine example of the happy and welcoming atmosphere. There was tremendous cooperation between staff, governors and parents. The great majority of parents responding to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) express positive views of the school.
- Good professional development enables staff to fully understand why new initiatives will be beneficial for pupils. School leaders have managed a high number of staff changes effectively by ensuring that new and returning teachers are fully aware of the school's expectations, and have the support to put these into practice.
- The school requested intensive support from the local authority after the last inspection, and there has been a high level of cooperation that has led to strong improvement. The local authority electronic assessment package includes a system for recording assessments made when children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage; this is invaluable for helping Reception teachers gauge the progress children are making in their classes.
- All teachers are fully involved in recording and tracking the progress of each pupil in their class, and are accountable to the headteacher at special meetings to discuss the rate of progress being made by each group. This means that teachers have a clear grasp of the impact of their teaching in reading, writing and mathematics. Most are confident to make adjustments to the curriculum to accelerate progress where necessary.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Extensive good quality information provided for the governing body by senior leaders means the governors know about the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the governing body relies heavily on school leaders to evaluate the school's performance in comparison with similar schools and is not yet asking sufficiently robust questions. The governors regularly access professional training to increase skills in areas such as safer recruitment and structural change, a recent audit of their skills rightly highlighted the need for a more robust approach when checking how well the school is doing, and a plan of action is now in place. The governing body sets out clear rewards for effective teaching and leadership to ensure that teaching improves, and uses information from performance management well. A 'governors' day' is organised annually so the governors have firsthand experience of many of the new initiatives to improve teaching. In partnership with senior leaders, the governing body uses the pupil premium grant wisely, for example to provide additional expertise in teaching reading and number for the relevant pupils that has increased their progress.

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	126182
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	406345

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Gavin Lester
Headteacher	Sheridan Upton
Date of previous school inspection	November 2010
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