

# St Paul's

Hertford Street, Birmingham, B12 8NJ

## Inspection dates

14–16 April 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

**3**

Leadership and management	Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students do not make consistently good progress in their learning from their various starting points. A number of students do not produce work of good enough quality particularly when writing.
- Teaching is not good enough to ensure that students, including the more able, achieve the standards they are capable of in all subjects.
- Not all teachers have a clear understanding of how much progress students should be making, whatever their starting points.
- Leaders' and managers' checks on the quality of teaching and assessment have not ensured that teaching and students' achievement improve quickly so that they are good or better.

### The school has the following strengths

- Governance is effective. The proprietors and senior leaders have driven through improvements so that the independent school standards are met. They have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Students' behaviour is good because effective action has been taken to improve staff skills and students' attitudes.
- The school provides a safe and secure environment for learning. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust.
- Students take an interest in their work and demonstrate respect for the staff. They make good progress with their speaking, listening and reading skills.
- Students achieve a range of external examinations and qualifications which enable them to move on successfully to further education courses.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited a number of classrooms to observe the quality of students' learning and their behaviour. Relationships between staff and students were also observed during breaks and lunchtimes.
- The quality of students' work was scrutinised, including work in books and folders. The inspector also took into account the extensive examples of written, practical and creative work displayed around the school.
- The inspector spoke with a small number of parents and considered responses to a recent school survey of parents' views. There were no responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with a representative of the governors' management committee, senior leaders, members of staff and students.
- The inspector checked a number of school policies and procedures, and their implementation, to ensure compliance with the independent school standards. This included whether the school now meets regulations it had not met on previous inspections and visits.

## Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St. Paul's School is a day special school providing for students with social, emotional and mental health needs. It is part of the St. Paul's Community Trust which also operates a number of additional services on the site and within the locality. The acting headteacher is also the chief executive of the Community Trust.
- The trust's additional services include a children's centre, a nursery provider and out-of-school provision. These are separately inspected.
- The school is registered to admit up to 100 students in the age range nine to 19 years. Until recently, students in the age range 16 to 19 years were admitted but this 'Junior College' provision has been temporarily discontinued; current provision is for students aged 10 to 16 years.
- There are currently 20 students, aged 10 to 16 years on roll, all of whom attend full-time. Very few students are in Year 6 and Year 7. Most of the students are funded by Birmingham local authority. They are placed at the school as a result of exclusion, or risk of exclusion, from previous schools. Almost all students on the school roll have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of the services of any alternative providers.
- In this small school there are no middle leaders. Senior leaders have direct line management responsibility for subject teachers, instructors and learning support assistants.
- The last full inspection of the school was in March 2012. An emergency inspection took place in May 2014 followed by two progress monitoring inspections in August 2014 and January 2015.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and improve students' progress to consistently good or better by:
  - raising students' expectations of the quality required in their written work
  - ensuring that more-able students work consistently at the highest levels of which they are capable
  - providing tasks and activities that support good learning for students including for the more able
  - implementing the planned arrangements for regular independent review and moderation of classroom practice.
- Strengthen the expertise and impact of senior leaders on teaching and achievement to ensure:
  - all staff have high expectations of what students can achieve from their various starting points
  - a common understanding by leaders and staff of national expectations for the extent of students' progress over time
  - a continuous improvement of the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and students achieve ambitious targets for their learning across all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently good and that all students make continuous good progress from their various starting points.
- Recent levels of staff turnover have restricted the extent to which responsibilities can be shared, for example, for subjects. As a result, the senior leadership team is stretched in its ability to embed best practice consistently throughout the school. For example, not all staff have high enough expectations of the levels of attainment of which many students are capable. Consequently students do not always progress quickly enough onto higher level courses.
- Senior leaders, working closely with the school's governing committee, have made good progress in addressing the challenges identified in the emergency inspection in May 2014. There have been strong improvements in students' behaviour, so that it is good. Students are now provided with a breadth of experiences in each of the required areas of learning. Students with statements of special educational needs have the specific therapies, mentoring and personal development opportunities required by their statements, which was not previously the case.
- Leaders have been successful in creating an environment in which teachers, instructors and learning support assistants work well together and students concentrate on their work. The capacity of staff to manage students' behaviour through effective teamwork has improved considerably. Consequently many students now make good progress up to foundation level studies in functional skills and GCSE courses.
- The acting headteacher demonstrates a tireless commitment to meeting the often complex needs of students. She works effectively with the senior leadership team to communicate high expectations of what students can achieve in their personal development and preparation for adult life.
- Senior leaders provide effective challenge and support for relatively new and inexperienced members of staff. There are good opportunities for staff to enhance their qualifications and to complete an appropriate range of training to strengthen their teaching and management roles.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all students. All have access to a broad curriculum and to a suitable range of externally accredited courses both academic and vocational. Relationships between staff and students are mutually respectful and trusting. Older students talk warmly about the positive impact that adults in the school have had on their attitudes and behaviour.
- Good arrangements are in place to support students as they make decisions and choices about their future careers and areas of further study. All students who left the school at the end of Year 11 in 2014 progressed to courses of further education.
- Arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are good. Students grow in self-esteem and confidence. Older students describe the school as being like a family where they look out for each other and help younger students to understand the school's expectations for behaviour. They talk confidently about their understanding of how to ensure safe lifestyles and of the services available in the local community to ensure their well-being. They have a good understanding of the diversity of beliefs, cultures and lifestyles represented within the school and the local community. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The governors and senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet statutory requirements. These include suitable measures for the safe recruitment of staff, the training of staff in child protection, first aid and fire safety, and effective lines of communication with parents and external agencies. Parents state that communication between the staff and home is good. They believe that their children are well cared for and making appropriate progress with their learning.

### ■ The governance of the school:

Governance is effective. The governors, working closely with senior leaders, have ensured that all the independent school standards are now met. They have worked diligently to review a wide range of policies and procedures and to support the staff in effective implementation of these.

Senior leaders report regularly to the governors on all aspects of the school's work, so that governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and students' achievement. The governors' management committee has a secure understanding of what is being done to improve teaching and tackle any weaknesses. They ensure that pay arrangements are linked to good teaching.

Governors are well informed about the school's areas for further improvement. They check regularly on the implementation and timescales for improvement and provide suitable challenge to senior leaders.

The governors and headteacher have recently linked with an established special school as a school improvement partner for the continuous review of St Paul's performance. These firm plans are designed to strengthen further the school's leadership and management and outcomes.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. It has a positive impact on learning. There has been strong improvement in students' behaviour over the last twelve months. The school's records demonstrate a significant decrease in the number of sanctions required for serious misbehaviour.
- Older students recognise that the school experienced a difficult time earlier in the school year. They believe that appropriate action has been taken to eliminate aggressive and disruptive behaviour; they are now able to focus on their work in a calm atmosphere.
- Students engage effectively in the learning opportunities provided for them. They particularly enjoy activities which take account of their views and feelings. Students in Years 10 and 11, for example, listened respectfully to the views of others when debating whether mobile phones should be allowed in school and whether a local park should be developed to provide new housing.
- The majority of students sustain their concentration well throughout lessons. They listen appropriately to teachers' presentations and are prepared to tackle the tasks provided for them. They are proud of their achievements when praised. This is a significant improvement on their behaviour in their previous settings.
- Students respect their teachers and work effectively, often in one-to-one arrangements, with learning support assistants. Low level distraction or inattention is minimal.
- Students behave appropriately around the school during breaks and lunchtimes. At lunchtime, for example, all staff and students eat together in the dining room enjoying food cooked during catering lessons. There is a relaxed sense of community as adults and students talk together and students contribute to the serving of food and clearing up responsibly.
- Students' overall attendance is below the national average. However, the attendance of many shows a strong improvement on their experience in previous placements. The majority of students attend regularly without any unauthorised absence. The school works well with parents, the local authority and other agencies to address the attendance of a small number of persistent absentees.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students state that they feel safe in school and that they have no concerns about bullying or risks to their security. The school's records show a significant decrease in incidents of poor behaviour and the use of exclusion as a sanction over the last twelve months.

- Safeguarding arrangements are implemented well. All members of staff are familiar with the requirements of the latest government guidance for safeguarding students.
- The premises provide a safe environment for learning. Routine arrangements for health and safety, including fire safety, are secure and systematically recorded.
- Staff have a good understanding of the behaviour and personal characteristics of individual students. Senior leaders are in regular communication with parents, and they ensure that external agencies working with families are kept informed about any areas of concern.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because work set is not always sufficiently demanding to enable all students to make consistently good progress. Activities and tasks set for students do not take sufficient account of what students already can do and what their next steps of learning should therefore be.
- Teachers assess students' work regularly and suitable systems for recording enable judgements to be made about the extent of their progress over time. However, staff do not have a secure common understanding of what represents appropriate standards of work against the requirements of the revised National Curriculum in all subjects. As a result, teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough to ensure that they make rapid progress from their various starting points.
- This is particularly so in students' written work, where written answers do not adequately demonstrate the extent of their understanding or the depth of their ideas. Their written answers are usually brief, because tasks set do not require them to develop their responses. Often, for example, students are required to fill in gaps in text or complete a number of similar calculations, when their oral responses demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge and understanding. Students' handwriting and the quality of presentation of written work are often untidy and sometimes work is incomplete.
- Students' work is marked regularly and good work is encouraged. Teachers' written comments generally draw attention to areas for improvement. However, marking does not routinely lead to an improvement in students' future work. This is because there are no consistent school-wide expectations conveyed to students as to how they should respond to marking.
- Students enjoy their learning and the majority engage positively in discussions, are keen to answer questions and willing to complete tasks diligently. Students in a science lesson, for example, demonstrated a good understanding of the conduction of heat and were able to talk fluently about their basic understanding of particle physics. Similarly students in a mathematics lesson demonstrated good understanding of rotational symmetry in a range of different polygons.
- There is much good practice in the quality of relationships between staff and students, and in the management of students' behaviour. Whole-school procedures to support teachers and to manage any incidents of inappropriate behaviour have improved considerably. Staff have a good understanding of the social and emotional characteristics of students. They are patient and respectful in their communication and, as a result, students demonstrate respect and cooperation and a good climate for learning is established.
- Learning support assistants make a good contribution to the learning of a number of students. They have an appropriate understanding of the learning characteristics and needs of the students with whom they work. They question and encourage students to think about and extend their answers and they provide encouragement in response to good efforts and completed activities.
- Good use is made of visual resources in a number of lessons to stimulate students' ideas and to provide concrete examples to illustrate more complex concepts. In an art lesson, for example, students researched designs for jewellery identifying examples of Celtic, modern, art deco and other designs. The

effective display of previous students' work illustrated what could be achieved and helped to raise students' aspirations.

- Students respond positively to opportunities to engage in practical activities. Their work in catering lessons is both demanding and rewarding. Younger students, for example, worked with sustained concentration as they measured, weighed, kneaded and mixed ingredients to make scones. They were proud of the variety and quality of their finished products. These students are making considerable strides in their attitudes to learning since entry. They apply their improving literacy and numeracy skills well.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- All students enter the school with attainment that is below that expected for their age, because of disruptions to their previous education. Students' progress across year groups and in individual subjects is uneven so that overall, it requires improvement.
- Teachers do not all plan activities that are sufficiently demanding or take account of students' current levels of achievement. Consequently, students do not all achieve the results they could in some courses, for example in English, mathematics and science.
- Students do not make consistently good progress with their handwriting, grammar and written expression because there is no consistent whole-school approach to the development of students' writing skills. Writing tasks are not always sufficiently demanding and insufficient attention is given to the accurate completion of written tasks and the quality of handwriting.
- The rate of students' progress has improved as behaviour has improved. Students currently in Key Stage 4 are now making faster progress and achieving at levels closer to those expected from their starting points. Throughout the school individual students are now beginning to make up lost ground and making progress in line with or better than that expected in English, mathematics and science. Progress in art and catering courses is mostly good.
- Students make good progress with their reading, speaking and listening skills. These skills are developed consistently and regularly in a systematic and effective way at levels appropriate to students' varied abilities.
- All students have access to external accreditation through functional skills and GCSE examinations. Students in Year 11 in 2014 all achieved external qualifications, including Level 1 functional skills or foundation level GCSE.
- Students new to the school this year have settled well into the expectations of the school and have made an effective start to their learning across the full range of subject studied. Students, who have a statement of special educational needs, are making at least similar progress to their classmates, because they now have the different resources and therapies that they need.
- The most-able students are making generally good progress in their understanding of concepts in mathematics and science, and in the development of their oral and reading skills in English. A small number demonstrate the ability to write fluently and accurately at a standard required for higher level examination success.
- Students are provided with effective, individualised support with their transition towards further education or employment with training when they leave school. All those students who left the school in Year 11 in 2014 progressed to continuing studies at further education colleges.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135208
<b>Inspection number</b>	462931
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/6115

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	20
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Paul's Community Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Gill Coffin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anita Halliday (Acting Head)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 March 2012
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£19,000
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